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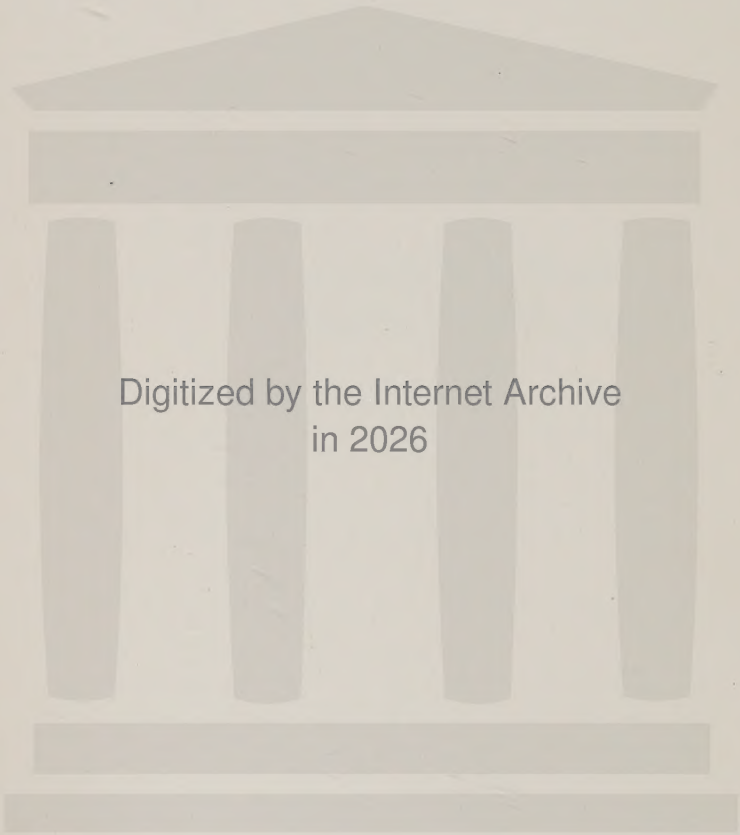
LIFE AND LETTERS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JOSEPH CONRAD

(1923)

JOSEPH CONRAD

LIFE AND LETTERS

by

G. JEAN-AUBRY

Volume II

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FIRST EDITION

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JOSEPH CONRAD LIFE AND LETTERS

CHAPTER X

THE WEIGHT OF THE BURDEN

(1905–1914)

To arrest . . . the hands busy about the work of the earth, and compel men entranced by the sight of distant goals to glance for a moment at the surrounding vision of form and colour, of sunshine and shadows.

(PREFACE TO "THE NIGGER OF THE 'NARCISSUS.'")

WRITING *Nostromo* had exhausted him, and besides being tired himself he was also anxious about the health of his wife, whose knee had been operated upon after a very nasty fall. On January 15, 1905, Conrad left England for Capri with his wife and son Borys, hoping that quiet and a good climate would stimulate his powers of creation. At Naples they were delayed a few days by bad weather, for the short passage was too rough for Mrs. Conrad, who was still a cripple. This did not, however, prevent Conrad from starting work again. When he set foot on the Continent his interest in foreign politics was immediately quickened. The German Emperor was at the moment restlessly active and Russia's behaviour was disquieting.

On the journey Conrad meditated an article on the European situation, quite a new subject for his pen; and this article, which soon developed in unforeseen directions, was the sum total of his literary activities during his stay in Italy. It shows, not only a surprising grasp of foreign politics, but even anticipates the events which ultimately led to the war of 1914. "Autocracy and War," now included in *Notes on*

Life and Letters, is by no means a negligible item in his work.

The Conrads remained at the Villa di Maria in Capri from January 21st to May 12th. But the weather on which he had staked his hopes had proved sullen and he suffered during his stay from bronchitis, influenza, and an obstinate insomnia. Although this sojourn did him no good, he made some new friends; among them Mr. Norman Douglas and a Polish gentleman, Count Szembek, who told him the story of an adventure which Conrad wrote later on under the title of "Il Conde." He earned very little money while he was there, and his friends in England, knowing that he was seriously embarrassed, set about obtaining for him a Civil List pension. The initiative in this matter was taken by Mr. (now Sir) Edmund Gosse and Mr. William Rothenstein; the "grant" was soon to prove a considerable alleviation to one whose financial troubles were increased by ill-health and exasperated nerves. On May 12th the Conrads left for Naples, whence they proceeded by sea to Marseilles.

It was nearly twenty years since he had visited that town, so intimately connected with his first sea and love experiences; no doubt those memories came crowding back upon him. They stayed a few days at the Hôtel de Genève and returned to Pent Farm on May 24th. His object in touching at Marseilles had been to meet his aunt, Mme Poradowska, and M. Robert d'Humières, who had just asked permission to translate *The Nigger of the "Narcissus."* [1]

Conrad had intended to stay longer at Capri and, indeed, he had thought of writing a Mediterranean novel, with the struggle of the French and English for Capri (1808) for its theme; [2] but he could not work there, and the prospect of his dramatized version of "To-morrow," one of the stories in *Typhoon and Other Stories,* being staged called him to London.

Sir (then Mr.) Sidney Colvin had induced the Stage Society to accept it. "One Day More" was performed on June 25th; it was well received. This pleased Conrad very much and gave

[1] He appears to have missed meeting M. Robert d'Humières, who did not publish his translation till four years later.

[2] See Letter to J. B. Pinker, February 23, 1905.

him confidence in his dramatic gifts, and after having been often tempted by the staging of some of his novels or short stories, he was to dramatize, nearly twenty years later, one of his novels, *The Secret Agent,* and another short story, "Laughing Ann."

During the last half of the year, in spite of worries, discomfort, and sharp attacks of gout, two chapters of *The Mirror of the Sea,* "Initiation" and "The *Tremolino,*" got themselves written; also in December one of the stories published in *A Set of Six,* namely, "The Informer." He wrote the latter while he was detained in London by the illness of his son, who had caught scarlet fever, and by an intermittent gout which kept him often in bed himself. His native energy, however, got the better of these more than discouraging conditions, and it was in the midst of them that he began that novel about Soho anarchists to which he first gave the title *Verloc,* but finally published as *The Secret Agent.*

His visit to Capri seems to have stimulated a desire to revisit the Continent, for again, at the beginning of February, 1906, he set out in search of health and warmth. His choice this time was the South of France and he established himself in Montpellier, where with his family he remained till April 14th. There he finished correcting *The Mirror of the Sea* and wrote a great part of *The Secret Agent.* His stay was a complete success; the climate of Languedoc did him good and he enjoyed living again in a French atmosphere that was thoroughly familiar to him. He intended to return at the end of the year, but he had first to go back to Pent Farm and London. In London, John Galsworthy had lent him his house, 14 Addison Road; and it was there that on the 2nd of August Conrad's second son, John Alexander, was born.

The Mirror of the Sea appeared early in October, 1906. It was a gratifying success, not only among sailors but among some of the most distinguished writers of the day. In particular, Rudyard Kipling wrote him a letter which pleased him very much.[1] On November 1st Conrad published *The Secret*

[1] "Kipling sends me an enthusiastic little note. The Age of Miracles is setting in! Also the age of Times Book Club. The End of the World is at hand." (Letter to John Galsworthy, October, 1906.) The text of Mr. Rudyard Kipling

Agent. He was at this time in very low spirits and he longed for kinder skies. A month later he again left with his family for Montpellier. At first he found it all he could wish; the winter was delightfully mild and the place had a soothing charm of its own. Conrad loafed and dawdled in the *cafés* of the Place de la Comédie. It is to one of these, one evening while the little orchestra was playing, that we owe the inception of one of the principal characters in *Victory,* and a whole scene, too, in that novel.[1] Conrad, during his stay at Montpellier, talked readily with chance acquaintances, and he saturated himself in French life, especially French military life. It was then and there that he conceived the idea of a Napoleonic romance, which should be staged on Elba,[2] and then that he wrote, during December and the beginning of January, "The Duel," one of his few stories which are inspired by a certain gaiety of spirit and "end happily." At the same time, he was at work on *Chance,* which he was, unfortunately, not then able to finish.

The whole family were struck down by a series of grave illnesses; both the children came within an ace of dying. Conrad's letters between February and June, 1907, reflect the anguished state of mind (he, himself, was racked by gout part of the time) in which he forged ahead with *Chance* and finished correcting *The Secret Agent,* both while he was at Montpellier and later at the Hôtel de la Poste in Geneva, where they stopped on the way to Champel. As soon as the children were fit to stand the journey, Conrad moved there, in the hope that Champel and its treatment would do for them what, in 1891 and 1895, it had done for him. There they remained till the beginning of August, returning for a while to Pent Farm. Finally, on September 10th, they installed themselves at Someries, near Luton in Bedfordshire, which was to be their home for more than a year.

The after-effect of these anxieties was disastrous to his health during the latter half of 1907. He had already written

has been reproduced in *Twenty Letters to Joseph Conrad,* First Edition Club, London, 1926.

[1] See "Author's Note": *Victory.* The French town is not named, but it is undoubtedly Montpellier.

[2] This was the first idea of *Suspense.*

a great part of *Chance,* but he was dissatisfied with what he had done. It was not developing to his taste; he abandoned it for "Il Conde," which took him only a few days to write. At the beginning of 1908 he started upon a novel *Razumov,* afterward called *Under Western Eyes,* the idea of which sprang out of a casual conversation he had had with a stranger at Geneva as long ago as 1895; for revisiting that city had brought that talk back to his mind. Spiritually and physically Conrad was in a very bad way all this year, but he succeeded in pulling himself together.

I have not been outside the door for thirteen days. I had no doctor this time. I am tired of having a doctor,—and the mere thought of the bill by and by makes me shudder. It's an impossible existence, but I keep on writing—trying to catch the spectre, the flying shadow of peace. The great thing is not to break down, but there are moments when I feel as if my resolution not to break down were weakening.[1]

In the autumn Ford Madox Hueffer started *The English Review,* a literary monthly. Conrad took a keen interest in this venture, and at Hueffer's request he abandoned his novel to write *Some Reminiscences* for it.[2] These dealt with his early recollections of Poland, his life at Marseilles, and his start in life as a sailor and as a man of letters.

At the beginning of 1909, Conrad and his family moved to Kent, a county for which he had long had a particular affection. They first established themselves at Aldington, near Hythe; but Conrad, whose nerves made him attribute any difficulty he might encounter in his work to the place where he happened to be, took a violent dislike to the house a month after they had settled in. "I want a change," he wrote to John Galsworthy, "for this hole is growing more odious to me every day." Nevertheless, his energy drove him along, in spite of all surface irritations, worries, and collapses. He continued to work hard and he wrote that November one of his best stories, "The Secret Sharer," correcting, too, the proofs of the French translation of *The Nigger of the "Narcissus."* He wrote to John Galsworthy:

[1] Letter to John Galsworthy, February 17, 1908.
[2] See *The Flurried Years,* by Violet Hunt. Hurst and Blackett, London, 1926.

I have been working rather well of late. And no gout so far! I am aware of a marked mental improvement. Only two years of no worse health would put me nearly right with the world. But I daren't hope—and yet I am unwilling to despair.[1]

and a month later:

In the last 23½ months, I have written 187,000 words, of which 130,000 of the novel. I sit 12 hours at the table, sleep six, and worry the rest of the time, feeling age creeping on and looking at those I love. For two years I haven't seen a picture, heard a note of music, had a moment of ease in human intercourse—not really.

Sixteen months for a long novel nearly done and some 57,000 words of other work is not so bad—even for a man with his mind at ease, with his spirits kept up by prosperity, with his inspiration buoyed by hope. There's nothing of that for me! I don't complain, dear Jack, I only state it as an argument, for when people appraise me later on with severity, I wish you to be able to say: "I knew him—he was not so bad." By Jove, all the moral tortures are not in prison-life. I assure you I feel sometimes as if I could drop everything.[2]

By January, 1910, he had finished *Under Western Eyes,* but for the two next months he was in bed suffering tortures from gout and groaning with rage and impatience: "I long for a clear run for my work, you understand," he wrote to John Galsworthy. "No gouty obstacles,—a clear twelve months. I've never had that in all my writing life." At the end of June, 1910, he migrated to Capel House, Orlestone, near Ashford, Kent, where he lived for nearly ten years. During the summer he wrote, "A Smile of Fortune" and "The Partner," and a little later "Freya of the Seven Isles," which appeared in two different collections of stories. At this time the New York *Herald,* prompted by Sir Hugh Clifford, made an offer to buy his work in advance; he immediately sat down to work at *Chance,* which he had put aside since 1906, modifying it and bringing it to a conclusion between June, 1911, and March 26, 1912. It began to appear in the New York *Herald,* before it was finished, namely, on January 21, 1912. As was invariably

[1] Letter, November 27, 1909.
[2] Letter, December 22, 1909.

the case, Conrad had to pay for his spell of work by several weeks of suffering and confinement. During short respites from gout he occupied himself in writing "The Inn of the Two Witches" and "Because of the Dollars," also two articles on the loss of the *Titanic;* while, during the next nineteen months, he devoted himself to the composition of *Victory,* with only one break toward the end of 1913, when he wrote "The Planter of Malata." On June 28, 1914, he wrote the last word of *Victory.*

At the beginning of July he took his son Borys to Sheffield for an examination, and about the same time Mme Retinger, the mother of two young Polish friends of his, asked him to visit her with his family in Poland. Conrad accepted, but not without hesitation. He wanted his sons to see his native country and yet he dreaded stirring up early and painful memories. Finally, on July 24, 1914, they started for Cracow by the Hamburg route. They had hardly arrived when Austria mobilized. A few days later war was declared and after August 1st the retreat of the travellers was naturally cut off. Thus fate decreed that Conrad should watch the outbreak of the European war on his native soil, upon which he had not set foot for nearly twenty years.

While his Polish friends were using their influence on his behalf with the Austrian authorities (war between Austria and England had not yet been declared), Conrad and his family removed to the Villa Konstantinowka at Zakopane, about four hours' journey from Cracow. On August 24th, Mr. Frederick C. Penfield, the American ambassador at Vienna, obtained passports for them, but they did not get permission to travel by car to Vienna until October 5th.[1] Once there Mr. Penfield arranged their journey to Milan, where they arrived on October 20th. They were only just in time to escape internment for the period of the war, as a letter from the American ambassador to Mr. F. N. Doubleday shows:

> During the crisis it came my way to serve hundreds of persons. In the case of Mr. Conrad there were certain difficulties. But I persisted and he is now back in England, and I trust adding the finishing touches

[1] See *Joseph Conrad as I Knew Him* by Jessie Conrad. Chap. V, "Our Visit to Poland in 1914."

to "The Big Rescue." In writing him you might state that a fortnight after he and his family had left Austrian soil there came from the Government here an order forbidding him going until the war was over.

From Milan they proceeded to Genoa, where they embarked for London on a Dutch ship returning from Java. On reaching London Conrad had to go straight to bed; the strain and discomforts of this trying journey had brought on a severe attack of gout. Thus, when the success of *Chance* had at last won for him the admiration of the greater public and his financial worries were at an end, war had come to destroy his peace of mind; bringing with it anguish on behalf of his native land and grave anxieties for his adopted one. Fifteen days after his return, however, he set to work and began *The Shadow Line.*

To H. G. Wells

Pent Farm.
13 Jan. 1905. 2 A.M.

MY DEAR WELLS,

I kept quiet imagining you to be very busy; and only now I intrude just to say good-bye—and no more. We are off to-day. A mad extravagant thing to do, but if I bring a book back from Capri it will be some justification. Jessie must have some change and I myself feel at the end of my tether.

Your first inst[t] in the *Pall Mall Magazine* is jolly *good.*[1] It tunes up remarkably well. Coming upon it unexpectedly (the No. of *P*[*all*] *M*[*all*] *M*[*agazine*] was sent to me) I gave a great gasp to see one story, of which I heard first so long ago, here beginning at last. I don't know that I will read the other instalments. I should think *not.* I'll refrain. I've been pleased and now I can wait. There is in that opening, my dear boy, a *quality.* You will smile scornfully if I name it; a sympathetic quality. Well, it *is* a bad definition but I can't think of anything nearer. I like the treatment itself (of these early episodes) and also the temper of that treatment. To begin in the way you do is generally dangerous. Often it kills all interest. In this case I think you come off wonderfully well. There's no taint of triviality. The interest is kindled. Upon the whole I think I'll read the second inst[t].

[1] *The War of the Worlds.*

Ivy Walls, Stanford-le-Hope, Essex, the Conrads' first home after they were married.

I had a rough time of it, my dear Wells, this last month or two. Well that's over. The success of the operation is beyond doubt.[1] Now the great thing is to recover the use of the limb. It's slow. Her nerves are gone now. Change will help her. Our love to you all.

P. S. I'll send you my address in a week or so. What are you writing? How do you get on?

To John Galsworthy

21st Jan'y 1905.
Villa di Maria
Isola di Capri (Napoli)

DEAREST JACK,

We've just got in here—seven days out from London! From Sunday night till Friday noon we have been weather bound in Naples, it being impossible to land Jessie at Capri if the sea was at all rough as the steamer does not come alongside the jetty; and the transfer from the steamer to small boat and from boat to shore required smooth water for safety. Perhaps the difficulty was not so great as all these people—the hotel keeper, the steamboat officials and the headman at Cook's—tried to make me believe. The weather was indeed very bad. I had foreseen everything in planning that voyage but that, and the delay of all these days in the hotel has utterly ruined me. In fact to be able to get over to Capri, I had to leave 150 frcs. unpaid on my bill and am beginning life in charge of a party of four with 30 frcs. in my pocket.

The nervous irritation of these days in Naples prevented me from doing anything. I got 1000 words of a political article written (and that's all) during the voyage.[2] Here the outlook is very promising; the rooms good, the terrace on the south side. Through the good Canonico we have fallen into the hands of priests. There were three of them waiting on the *Marina grande* for our arrival, which took place on a moonlight evening about 7. The whole population surged and yelled round poor Jessie's chair, while we waited on the quay for the large carriage which was ordered but did not turn up in time. I think we will be very comfortable here. But the whole expedition is a mad thing really, for it rests upon what I am not certain of—my power to produce some sixty thousand words in 4 months. I feel sick with apprehension at times. Jessie tired but progressing all the time.

[1] Mrs. Conrad had just been operated upon.

[2] "Autocracy and War," first published in the *Fortnightly Review*, July, 1905; then as a pamphlet for private circulation, in 1918, and included now in *Notes on Life and Letters*.

To R. B. Cunninghame Graham

2d Febr. 1905
Villa di Maria
Isola di Capri (Napoli)

TRÈS CHER AMI,

This moment I receive *Progress;*[1] or rather the moment (last night) occurred favourably to let me read before I sat down to write.

Nothing in my writing life (for in the sea life what could approach the pride of one's first testimonial as a "sober and trustworthy officer"!) has given me greater pleasure, a deeper satisfaction of innocent vanity, a more distinct sense of my work being tangible to others than myself—than the dedication of the book so full of admirable things, from the wonderful preface to the slightest of the sketches within the covers.

My artistic assent, my intellectual and moral satisfaction with the truth and force of your thought living in your prose is unbounded without reservation and qualification. And with every masterly turn of phrase, masterly in picturesque vision and in matchless wording, my pride grows, till it equals—nay—almost surpasses,—the pride of that long ago moment, in another existence, when another sort of master[2] of quite a different craft vouched with his obscure name for my "sobriety and trustworthiness" before his fellows, well able to judge and amongst whom I believed my life was destined to run to the end.

Tout à vous, de cœur.

To J. B. Pinker

5 Febr. 1905.
Villa di Maria,
Capri, Italy.

MY DEAR PINKER,

I send the form filled up at the earliest possible moment.

Imagine Miss Jackson had influenza or pneumonia—quite an illness. She's just convalescent. It's perfectly awful. My wife had to nurse her

[1] *Progress and Other Sketches,* by R. B. Cunninghame Graham. (Duckworth) London, 1905.

[2] William Smart, master of the *Loch Etive,* when Joseph Conrad left her as a third mate in April, 1881.

and so on; and I, who now if ever wanted peace to concentrate my thoughts after all the anxieties in London, could not achieve it (as you may guess) in these lodgings. I have worked but badly—there's no use disguising the truth—I've been in a state of exasperation with the eternal something cropping up to distract my mind. Of course, Jessie did not get the attention which was necessary; but nevertheless she's progressing slowly.

I had to take another room (in the same house) to do such work as I was able to achieve. It's mostly the novel.[1] However, when I get at last into the stride, I shall sit night and day and something considerable (I still trust) will come of it. Of course you may say that I ought to disregard all the complications and peg away with my eyes shut to domestic affairs. I know some men are capable of that sort of thing; and with an organized household one could perhaps abstract oneself for six hours per day. It's another matter with me. You understand that my wife was pretty helpless and required some attention; the child too. For me to have to lay down my pen ten times in the course of the day is fatal. I wish there had been something of a hack-writer in my composition.

The copy of "Tallness of Minor Spars" I sent you last Dec^er^ I think needs no revision.[2]

M. d'Humières, a Frenchman of letters of some distinction, asked me for permission to translate the *Nigger*.[3] In view of your action in the matter of the Scandinavian proposal [4] I referred him direct to Heinemann. Is that right?

What about the Germans?

Zwingli wrote me that if you came to terms with the *I^te^ Ber^ner^ Zeitung* they would pay his expenses down here so that he could work under my eye.

That is all.

Better news next time.

[1] *The Secret Agent.*

[2] It refers very probably to "Cobwebs and Gossamer," a chapter of *The Mirror of the Sea.*

[3] Robert d'Humières' translation of *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* appeared serially in *Le Correspondant* (August 25 to October 10, 1909), and in book form the following year.

[4] A Swedish translation of *Tales of Unrest, "Fredlösa Historier,"* had already been published in Stockholm (1903).

To R. B. Cunninghame Graham

16 Febr. '05
Villa di Maria
Capri, Italy.

CHER AMI,

Your letter is delightful. As to your sea-people and their manœuvres (in *Progress*), you've confounded nothing either in form or in the substance. You seem to know more of all things than I thought it possible for any man to know, since the Renaissance swells (who knew everything about everything) perished by sword, dagger, poison, pest (and too much "donne") in the glorious yesterday of the world.

Vous—vous êtes né trop tard. The stodgy sun of the future—our early Victorian future—lingers on the horizon, but all the same it will rise—it will indeed—to throw its sanitary light upon a dull world of perfected municipalities and W. C.s *sans peur et sans reproche.* The grave of individual temperaments is being dug by G. B. S. and H. G. W. with hopeful industry.[1] *Finita la commedia!* Well, they may do much, but for the saving of the universe I put my faith in the power of folly.

Do come over if you go south our way. A steamer leaves Naples at 9 A. M. and 3 P. M. every day. Arrives at Capri noon and six P. M. We can't, alas! offer to put you up as we are pigging it in 3 rooms of an inferior villa. But the Hôtel de Capri is a place where one can hang out well enough for a small ransom. Of the questions you start in your "Polish" letter I'll talk—but I don't trust myself to write. It would scandalize you if I did.

Jessie and Borys send their regards.

Tout à vous.

To J. B. Pinker

23d Febr. 1905.
Villa di Maria
Isola di Capri, Italy.

MY DEAR PINKER,

It's lucky that your letter re ins[uran]ce reached me when it did. A day or two after sending the answer I got influenza with bronchitis and so on: a terrible time. I've been in bed of course. Now I suffer

[1] George Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells.

from insomnia and nerves, for which I am being stuffed with strychnia and other drugs. I won't tell you what I think—or what I feel—at seeing days slipping away from me in that miserable fashion. A whole month is gone since we settled here!

Whatever was written of my political articles needs recasting in view of the events in Russia. I've been trying to do that when in bed, dictating to my wife. I've 4000 words ready of an article which I call "The Concord of Europe." [1] It is a sort of historical survey of international politics from 1815 (the Vienna Congress), with remarks and conclusions tending to demonstrate the present precarious state of that concord and bringing the guilt of that precariousness to the door of Germany or rather of Prussia. There are other things too—but I won't enlarge here. Six thousand words will be the length, I suppose. If the monthlies are shy of it, I fancy Prothero (*Quarterly Review*) will take it.

There may be something in it. At any rate, the question is treated largely. Perhaps it would be better to publish without signature. It'll be for you and the eventual Editor to consider that.

Impossible to say yet how the novel will shape itself out. I am too weak physically and mentally to think much about it.

On the other hand I've found here the subject of my Mediterranean novel—or indeed rather the subject has found me. It is the struggle for Capri in 1808 between the French and the English. I have access here to the collection of books and MS. belonging to Dr. Cerio. There are letters—songs—pamphlets and so on relating to that time.[2]

A book treating of the bay of Naples, Capri, Sorrento, etc.—places visited every year by the English and Amᶜᵃⁿ tourists—stands a better chance of popularity. That is what I must aim at in the measure of my forces. There is not a bad story too in that episode, or at least the elements of a story. A hermit used to live in the grotto near the ruins of the villa of Tiberius at that time and tradition mixes him up with the military events in a rather queer way. I haven't yet, of course, examined my material but if there is any inspiration for a sea and land tale in it the working off of my second contᶜᵗ with Harpers will be a much easier matter than I dared to hope.

The weather is impossible. Rain, hail, thunder—that's what we've had for the last 4 days. But the air is getting warmer.

Pray send me £25 by post in notes—if possible. A check would have to be sent back to Lond: before Cook would give me money for it—a delay of another 3 days, and I am now utterly without cash.

[1] The final title was to be "Autocracy and War."

[2] This can be considered as a hint of the Mediterranean novel which later on developed into *Suspense*.

I hung back hoping to send you MS. but this horrid influenza came and I can wait no longer.

To (Sir) Edmund Gosse

Villa di Maria
Capri, Italy.
23rd Mch. 1905.

DEAR MR. GOSSE,

I have received to-day a communication from W. Rothenstein, the answer to which is due to you directly and without delay. Acutely conscious of being neither the interpreter in any profound sense of my own epoch nor a magician evoker of the past either in its spirit or its form, I have often suffered in connection with my work from a sense of unreality, from intellectual doubt of the ground I stood upon. This has occurred especially in the periods of difficult production. I had just emerged from such a period of utter mistrust when Rothenstein's letter came to hand revealing to me the whole extent of *your* belief and the length to which you have taken the trouble to go to prove it—even to the length of making another mind share in your conviction.[1] I accept this revelation with eagerness. I need not tell you that this moral support of belief is the greatest help a writer can receive in those difficult moments which Baudelaire has defined happily as *"les stérilités des écrivains nerveux."* Quincey too, I believe, has known that anguished suspension of all power of thought that comes to one often in the midst of a very revel of production, like the slave with his *memento mori* at a feast.

For that kind of support my gratitude is due to you in the first instance. It can, properly speaking, hardly equal the obligation. The material outcome of your active belief, I accept *sans phrases,* which I am sure you do not desire either for yourself or the Prime Minister. I know too that you will be good enough to express the perfect sincerity of my sentiments in the proper quarters with greater tact and juster measure than I, in my inexperience, could command.

The feeling of pride is not perhaps one to entertain in this connection. It is the one however that comes to the surface at the end of this letter. It cannot be but a matter of pride for me that two minds like yours and the Prime Minister's, which it has never entered into the compass of my hopes to reach, have been moved by an acquaintance with my work to a friendly interest in my mere personality.

[1] The Prime Minister, then Mr. Balfour.

To (Sir) Edmund Gosse

Villa di Maria, Capri
11th April 1905.

DEAR MR. GOSSE,

I don't know what I appreciate most:—the trouble you've taken in this matter, which, depending from first to last on your influence has matured so generously in the warmth of your active good-will—or the delicate consideration for one's anxieties and feelings proved so clearly by the letter I've just received.

My thanks go out not so much to the facts and figures (unexpected as these are) it contains, as to the friendly insight which has put the pen into your hand so promptly. I must thank you too for consenting to make yourself the interpreter of my feelings in a manner so acceptable to the Prime Minister. For the rest, I may say that the way of return having been so unexpectedly made smooth, I am more anxious than ever to get back to Pent Farm, under whose lowly (and imperfectly watertight) roof five volumes [1] have had the audacity to get themselves written. I've done very badly here. It's all very well for Englishmen born to their inheritance to fling verse and prose from Italy back at their native shores. I, in my state of honourable adoption, find that I need the moral support, the sustaining influence of English atmosphere even from day to day.

In the matter of the confidential treating of the transaction, I conceive that there's no option for me but to extend the rule of absolute discretion even to such friends as H. G. Wells and Hugh Clifford—since the most innocent confidence could be, by some accident, made to look like a wilful disregard, on my part, of the King's distinct wish. I suppose that the view I take of the injunction conveyed in your letter does not appear exaggerated to you. My feeling is that your tact and experience are the best judges in what direction (if at all) the letter of that injunction may be overstepped consistently with the respect of its spirit.

To H. G. Wells

Capri, Italy.
25 Ap. 1905.

MY DEAR WELLS,

I was trying to get something off to Pinker for dear life and that's why I did not write sooner to acknowledge the book's most welcome arrival.

[1] *Tales of Unrest, Lord Jim, Youth, Typhoon,* and *Nostromo.*

You know—I had rather talk than write. Words do chill the warmth of thought, whether it is set down in a book or in a letter. At least, so it is in my case. All I can say to begin with is that I am quite enthusiastic about the work.[1] From the first line of the preface to the closing sentence I feel in touch with a more accessible Wells—a Wells mellowed, as it were, in the meditation of the three books, of which this last one is certainly the nearest to my understanding and the most commanding to my assent.

It is a quality not easily defined; but since, O Brother!, I am but a novelist I must speak in images. Thus I say it is not merely talking to us; it is Wells extending a hand. No civilized man, in his infinite variety, need, when reading that book, feel "left" for a single moment. Helpful would be a word to use if it had not been desecrated in connection with infinite rubbish. And of course this helpfulness should be defined. And the definition is that it is just indefinable; that what is so really helpful in your last book is as difficult to seize as the quality of light in the landscape which at certain times appeals to us—invigorates our thought by the way of emotion (I suppose)—more than another. I would call it the intellectual kindliness characterizing your development of the idea. This is the nearest I can come to expressing that something which differentiates the thought of this book from the two preceding vols. And don't think for a moment that your thought lost anything of its force. It lost nothing. I know two men here, fellows by no means contemptible, and since the book came we have met 3 times and each occasion was a "Wells" sitting. They are much better fit to judge your calibre than I am. Our discussions were infinitely varied and no doubt very vain. But afar here, away from all the petty clamour and clatter of criticizing pars, we could agree on one point: that you were the one honest thinker of the day. I don't propound this as a discovery just made in history or ethics. It was just the form in which we found it possible, in perfect accord, to express the high value of your thinking.

And one of these men was a Scot (born in Austria),[2] once in our diplomatic service, which he threw up, I fancy, in sheer intellectual disgust. A man who cannot only think, but write. The other was an American.[3] . . . But I perceive this piece of paper is written over. I won't go on now. I'll, in a day or two, write more. I've been confoundedly tired here. Jessie got on wonderfully well. Our love. Goodbye provisionally.

[1] *A Modern Utopia* by H. G. Wells (Chapman & Hall, London, 1905).
[2] Norman Douglas.
[3] An American called Jerome.

To (Sir) Sidney Colvin

Villa di Maria, Capri
28 April 1905.

MY DEAR MR. COLVIN,

I was waiting for Ford M. Hueffer's answer before writing to you. I hear he wrote you directly. The facts are that Hueffer, a good and dear friend, helped me by spending a whole day in taking out the dialogue of the story in a typewritten extract for my use and reference. The play, as can be shown by the MS., has been written entirely in my own hand;[1] and I wrote it alone in a room lent me by an acquaintance to ensure perfect quiet for the six days it took me to achieve that very small feat. In such matters however one cannot be too scrupulous. I won't say any more. You'll understand *à demi-mot*. And of course now Ford has written to you, you'll allow me to show you the MS. on my return. Five minutes' perusal will show you the exact value of the sample which caused me to refer to Hueffer at the last moment and the genuineness of his disclaimer. I've always looked upon the play as mine only till brought to terms—as it were—by the offer of the Stage Society for which, . . . as for the very inception of the play,—I have to thank your unwearied interest. You may take it from me that no one collaborated in that play so much as yourself. But when actually pen in hand to accept eagerly the proposal conveyed in your letter I felt that not even a shadow of ambiguity should be allowed to rest upon my action in the matter.

For the rest, my dear Mr. Colvin, you can do no wrong in this affair. I don't think we can get back to England much before the 15th of May. I am ready to defer to the suggestions as to cutting out which our unique G. B. S. will favour me with. The artificiality of the abominable fish-hawker has ever been an offence to me. In my unskilfulness I could not imagine anything else to "establish" the psychology of the girl. It is a gross artifice, I own—and I am glad to be shown that I was mistaken.

Many thanks from us both to Mrs. Colvin and yourself for the expression of your kind wishes. When in London before our departure, I was so wretched that I dared not intrude upon anybody whatever my abominable nervousness. I worried however. Here I have done very badly. Reaction (after those six weeks before and after the operation), with an attack of influenza superadded, unfitted me for any sort of pur-

[1] This refers to "One Day More," dramatization of the tale "To-morrow," included in *Typhoon and Other Stories*. It had been written by Joseph Conrad in John Galsworthy's studio on Campden Hill. (See *Laughing Ann & One day More*, two plays by Joseph Conrad, London, [John Castle, 1924], and New York, [Doubleday Page & Co.], Introduction, p. vi.

poseful thinking. My wife however has made a splendid recovery and I am just beginning to scribble at some speed.

With kindest regards to Mrs. Colvin and yourself.

To John Galsworthy

Capri, 1905
5th May

MY DEAREST JACK,

I own I expected good news from you. They are none the less welcome for that. I was more concerned than uneasy at your seediness, which I seemed to know so well. It was like beholding one's own weird acquaintance in a looking glass: my own well known mysterious, disturbing sensations reflected in your personality, which is as near the inner me as anything not absolutely myself can be. I saw you depart from Naples with a feeling of confidence that no usual current mistrust of life could qualify. You were going off in good hands. And I returned tranquil as to your fate—to the tortures of my awful, overwhelming indolence—the very negation of tranquillity—just as a cage is not a shelter, is the negation of a place of rest.

I would have beaten myself to pieces against the wires if I too had not been in good hands. But it's no use enlarging on one's evil or good fortune. I finished the paper which you have seen,[1] then I rewrote it entirely and extended my worthless rhetoric to 10,000 words, and I sent it off. It was a fine show of work to make—the work of one month in nearly four. My average has been just about that; 10,000 a month. And it will have to be caught up. I put my trust in the Pent. This place here, this climate, this sirocco, this tramontana, these flat roofs, these sheer rocks, this blue sea—are impossible. . . .

The paper's called "Autocracy and War." I don't know who will consent to print it—and with how much scorn and derision it may be received. It is however very likely it will not be noticed at all—a very good fate. Since, I have begun a short story, something like *Youth*—but not at all like it.[2] In the face of my situation it is mere trifling.

The grant of which I've told you is much better than expected. It will be something like 300. It will get me out of here without further recourse to Pinker and set me going at the Pent. Another piece of news is that (would you believe it?) the Stage Society wishes to perform "Tomorrow" next June. Colvin[3] wrote me. Several men (whose names I

[1] Refers to "Autocracy and War."
[2] Probably "The Brute."
[3] Sir Sidney Colvin.

can't recall just now), and amongst them G. B. Shaw, profess themselves very much struck. But alterations are demanded and I don't know whether I can return in time. I've written to London to hurry up enough pounds to take us home—but I don't know. I own I would like to secure that chance of the stage. I still cherish the hope of getting away by the 12th inst.

We go by sea to Marseilles, where I want to have a day with M. d'Humières who is translating my poor *Nigger*. I fancy two days at sea will do me good. We would go by one of the small boats of the Adria Co. or Florio Co. I shall look forward to the view from the bridge. And in Marseilles I did begin life 31 years ago! It's the place where the puppy opened his eyes. Marguerite Poradowska is also there—who really seems to love us.

To Ford Madox Hueffer

[Capri] 9th May, 1905.

DEAREST OLD BOY,

Hurrah for the *Soul of London!*[1] Brute as I am by nature and training, I was touched by the sight of those pages so familiar in a way and so strange now, when far away from you I went off following your thought overleaf from page to page.

I went straight to the last chapter (after reading the preface). If one could believe in the fate of books, this one deserves the blessing of a thing without sin. Of course it was not a surprise. I heard it was coming out. Still one had enough to be anxious about. The Editor, the format, the body for that soul, it was enough to speculate about. It is very dear and good of you to have sent it on without waiting for my return,—which is now a question of days.

Vous m'avez manqué affreusement. I've done nothing. And if it were not that Jessie profited so remarkably, I would call the whole expedition a disaster. This climate, what between Tramontana and Sirocco, has half killed me in a not unpleasant languorous, melting way. I am sunk in a vaguely uneasy dream of visions, of innumerable tales that float in an atmosphere of voluptuously aching bones. *Comprenez-vous ça?* And nothing, nothing can do away with that sort of gently active numbness. The scandals of Capri, atrocious, unspeakable, amusing, scandals international, cosmopolitan and biblical, flavoured with Yankee twang and the French phrases of the *gens du monde,* mingle with the

[1] Ford Madox Hueffer's book, *The Soul of London: A Survey of a Modern City* (Alston Rivers, London, 1905).

tinkling of guitars in the barbers' shops and the rich contralto of the *bona sera signore* of the big Mrs. Morgano as I drag myself in an inwardly fainting condition into the café to give some chocolate to *ma petite famille.* All this is a sort of blue nightmare traversed by stinks and perfumes, full of flat roofs, vineyards, vaulted passages, enormous rocks, pergolas, with a mad gallop of German tourists *lâchés à travers tout cela* in white Capri shoes, over the slippery Capri stones, Kodaks, floating veils, strangely waving whiskers, grotesque hats, streaming, tumbling, rushing, ebbing from the top of Monte Solaro (where the clouds hang) to the amazing rocky chasms of the Arco Naturale—where the Lager beer bottles go pop. It is a nightmare with the fear of the future thrown in.

I hadn't the pluck to write to you, not even after the telegram about the play,—not after your good letter which saddened me a little and augmented my desire to see you very much. And *à propos de tout cela,* if I inquired what you wished done re play, it was mostly from the feeling that you did not like the thing anyhow. And as I feel also it's going to fail in the end, I could not without your distinct authorization associate you with what I believe will be a sort of *"four."*

Will be at the Pent about 16–17, drop me a line there, say in a week. I must make a colossal effort for copy. I must! or die. The last would be the easier feat—and so beautifully final.

Love from us all to the house of Hueffer, with many compliments for la Señora (as warm as a caballero may venture without absolute risk of sudden death) from me. Jessie with affectionate messages wishes you all to know that she is in rude health. She looks like a jolly milkmaid, and it's balm to me.

To John Galsworthy

Pent Farm
30th June, 1905.

MY DEAREST JACK,

Without vain apologies and explanations I proceed to make my report of such things as may be reported on less than 3 reams of paper.

We returned here on the 24th[1] and since then the résumé of my activities runs as follows. Gout. Tinkering at the play. Worry. Two *Mirror* papers.[2] Touch of gout. Rehearsals of the play, with going up to London for the purpose (which is a game not worth the candle).

[1] Conrad meant 24th of May, from Capri.

[2] "In Captivity" and "Initiation" (see *The Mirror of the Sea*).

Loss of time. Some experience (which may or may not be of use). Performance of the play on evening of 25th (Sunday) and matinées on two following days as after-piece to Miss Alma Tadema's "The Near Felicity," a thing with some smart touches and some considerable folly.

As to the success of my thing, I can't say anything. I've heard that some papers praised it and some ran it down. On Tuesday when we went (like the imbeciles we are) there was some clapping but obviously the very smart audience did not catch on. And no wonder! On the other hand the celebrated "man of the hour," G. B. Shaw, was ecstatic and enthusiastic. "Dramatist," says he. With three plays of his own running simultaneously at the height of the season he is entitled to speak. Of course, I don't think that I am a dramatist. But I believe I've 3 or even 5 acts somewhere in me. At any rate the reception of the play was not such as to encourage me to sacrifice six months to the stage. Besides I haven't the six months to throw away.

In the end: loss of time. A thorough unsettling of the writing mood. Added weariness.

On the other hand, an American manager has already written to G. B. S. asking to procure him a prompt copy of the play, which he has a mind to play as *lever de rideau* for Shaw's "Candida" in U. S. But nothing's decided as yet. And anyhow it's all unsettling, unsettling.

Clear product, in the month since our return, with the worry of gout and the disturbance of the play, 7,000 words written,—2 *Mirror* papers.

To-day the article "Autocracy and War" with the motto *Sine ira et studio* appeared in the *Fortnightly*. *I hope* for a sensation. I am reduced to that.

To E. L. Sanderson

Pent Farm.
15 July, 1905.

DEAREST TED,

You are always that to me,—however unworthy I may be to address you thus.

But if you think of me as mentally bedridden you will find it easier to forgive me. I have not been unfaithful. I have been only paralyzed.

Discontent,—with myself, with my work, with my general ineffectiveness,—has benumbed my hand but left my affection untouched. Often thought went to sleep,—but memory never. And what could one say? All the words seemed lifeless and I had not the courage to bombard you

with things that had lost their meaning. I'd rather be pronounced a pig than a bore (observe the pun "boar." I am indeed in a bad way)—and if optimism is often wearisome such pessimism as mine grows soon intolerable in expression. I didn't want to bore you, and since I believe in your friendship, I did not want to sadden you,—who had causes enough not to find life particularly joyful.

You, my dear fellow, have done so much for me.—You have *given* me so much, simply by one day recognizing my existence, that I feel ashamed to have never anything to give you,—nothing but a book more or less inept now and then. I am sending you one to-day,—to you and your dear wife, to whom I wish to be remembered humbly and affectionately,—as I think of you all.

Pray don't believe that the vol. I am sending is aimed at individuals. It is in origin and conception directed against the tendencies of the time, —more or less of every time. We do not want to attack these with a bludgeon, and perhaps the blade of our rapier is a little thin. Otherwise I am not ashamed to stand up for the book, which has already brought me some abuse and perhaps shall bring more.

However such as it is,—here it is,—for you two. I haven't written it all myself but I worked very hard at it all the same,—and as is always the case when I work, your personality, my dear Ted, with one or two more, has been invisibly at the elbow of my writing hand. Thus it shall always be to the end of time,—my time.

Soon you'll hear from me again. Don't for a moment suppose this is all I wanted to tell you. I want to tell you much more than I can just now express and so I stop.

Drop me a line on a post card with the address of your Mother. I've been hearing of you from Jack. Jessie sends her love to your wife.

To Norman Douglas

Pent Farm,
15th July 1905.

MY DEAR DOUGLAS,

I am surprised. I dropped you a letter card. At least I think I must have posted it, since the search in the pocket of the clothes I wore in town that day reveals nothing. I repeat my thanks.

You wouldn't believe it! But It must be said: I've had three days in bed with influenza. I must have got infected in town the day we went to see the performance of the play.[1] I really think I am accursed. Garnett

[1] "One Day More."

has got (since yesterday) the "Nelson" and "Sentimental Love" papers. You may be sure that his interest will be genuine. Wells I haven't seen yet and no word came either from him or his wife. I don't know where he is. Pinker has returned from U. S. I did not see him yet and won't see him till the tale I've in hand just now is finished: a matter of a couple of days. When I go up I'll take with me your vol. and the Fisher Unwin agreement. In the letter I've had from him he does not say what he has done in America. Either with your stuff or mine,—I fear therefore: not much.

Patience et Perseverance must be our motto.

Life is hard, my dear fellow, and not only hard. But I am not going to groan. We'll do something yet. My play is not a success, tho' a good many kind things have been said and printed. All the same I felt it did not get hold of the public. I am afraid it won't do much to open the door of fortune to your humble servant. Still I've a notion for a farcical comedy in my head, but I haven't either the time or the courage to tackle it now.

To Norman Douglas

Pent Farm.
July 24th 1905.

MY DEAR DOUGLAS,

I enclose Edward Garnett's letter because it expresses exactly what I have felt on the subject of the two papers.

With the "Nelson" I will try Lippincott certainly, and that is the only opening. For—it is very true—I run the risk of being kicked downstairs by the average British Editor. You don't allow enough for the imbecility of human nature.

The objection to the *Westminster Review* is the one Garnett states. Moreover, no one reads the thing.

As to "Sentimental Love," I do not know what to do with it. Hadn't you better have it back to reconsider and rewrite on broader lines than an attack upon Finck implies?

To introduce the thin end of the wedge you must give me acceptable stuff on other than literary grounds. You must get a footing before you can begin to hit. I beg you earnestly to finish your article on "The Russian" at once and send it to me. Don't be disgusted or discouraged.

P. S. Depend upon it that everything possible shall be done. But I advise you to take Garnett's advice to heart.

When you are in Naples could you, when lunching at the Hôtel de Genève, ask the porter about my stick which I think I must have left there? Black with silver head. Would it be possible to send it by post, wrapped up in paper? Or if not, please take charge of it for me for a time.

To Norman Douglas

Pent Farm.
18 Oct., 1905.

MY DEAR LONG-SUFFERING DOUGLAS,

You must have thought me a conscienceless brute. Alas! I have been an overworked one. I may safely add that I haven't had more than 3 weeks of decent health in the whole time since I left Capri.

I am afraid you are bitterly disappointed at the slowness in placing your articles. My dear Douglas, believe me that all that could be done has been done. The first campaign failed but I am going to open the record when we go to London for a week end Nov. Even the "Nelson" may be rammed in somewhere after the heat of the centenary is over. I didn't see what good it would do to you to get the stuff back. I have talked of it in many places—and if suddenly anybody were to ask me for it, I would not like to have to say I hadn't got it.

Hueffer's work was kept off for 3 years and now it is all going as easy as can be. Some of this stuff has been in Pinker's drawer two years now. It is beastly no doubt; but if we once break the door open, there will be no waste.

Even if you do go to India leave the articles behind you here. Don't forget, my dear fellow, that your point of view in general is the unpopular one. It is intellectual and uncompromising. This does not make things easier.

People don't want intelligence. It worries them—and they demand from their writers as much subserviency as from their footmen, if not rather more.

I trust you are not angry with me. I have had a deucedly hard time of it lately.

I am just keeping my head above water.

Good-bye for the present. I'll write again soon.

Pent Farm, Stanford, near Hythe, Kent. It was here that *Tales of Unrest*, *Lord Jim*, *Youth*, *Typhoon*, and *Nostromo* were written.

To H. G. Wells

20th October, 1905.
evening.

DEAREST H. G.,

All luck to *"Kipps."* I've just seen that he came out to-day.

I suppose A. J. Dawson told you he has seen me down—very much down. I got up and went down again some four distinct times since that time; having nevertheless managed to do some 13 thousand words—the last paper of the *Mirror of the Sea* vol.[1] It won't appear till after the New Year, but anyhow it is off my chest.

It is all very monstrous—my news is. I stick here fighting with disease and creeping imbecility—like a cornered rat, facing fate with a big stick that is sure to descend and crack my skull before many days are over. If I haven't been to see you (which I admit is beastly and ungrateful) I haven't been to see anyone else—except Ford [2] and, of course, the indispensable Pinker, but that only officially—in his office. As to Ford he is a sort of lifelong habit—of which I am not ashamed, because he is a much better fellow than the world gives him credit for. After pulling off with an awful effort the first 5000 words of a thing which is supposed (for trade purposes) to be a novel,[3] I took an afternoon's rush to Winchelsea and back, letting the air flow through me: a silly, perhaps, and expensive restorative but the only one left to me. As to working regularly in a decent and orderly and industrious manner, I've given that up from sheer impossibility. The damned stuff comes out only by a kind of mental convulsion lasting two, three or more days—up to a fortnight—which leaves me perfectly limp and not very happy, exhausted emotionally to all appearance, but secretly irritable to the point of savagery.

You understand that in either condition I am not very fit to show myself to my fellow creatures.

Jessie begs you to explain to your wife that the only reason she has not yet put in an appearance is simply because she has no longer the pluck to drive herself or even to be driven by the lad. The mare is not very good with motors it is true, but there's no danger really. However, I don't insist because, with a defective heart, any sort of emotion is certainly not good. So she walks to and fro on the sheltered bit of road near the farm to the amount of about a mile per day.

[1] In reality not the very last one, but "The Nursery of the Craft" and "The *Tremolino*," which formed only one chapter under the title of "The Inland Sea."

[2] Ford Madox Hueffer.

[3] *The Secret Agent.*

Perhaps you've heard that my little play was performed by the Stage Society under Colvin's wing, as it were. Complete failure, I would call it. G. B. S. thinks I ought to write another. That luxury is out of my reach, however, yet the temptation is great.

If you don't know it already it may interest you to hear that in Anatole France's last book [1] there are two allusions to you. Whatever may be the differences of opinion it cannot be denied that A. F., apart from being a great master of prose, is one of the finest minds of our time. If he has not understood you completely he has certainly apprehended your value.

One paragraph begins: "They are few who have tried to penetrate the future from pure curiosity, without moral intention or an optimistic bias. I know only of H. G. Wells etc., etc." (allusion to *Time-Machine*); the other, only two lines, runs:

"A naturalist philosopher who never quails before his own thought, H. G. Wells, has said: 'Man is not final.'"

Those things, read in their proper place, demonstrate that you have produced a strong impression upon a man who, anyway, is far above the common in his intelligence and his sympathies.

Can you tell me if the *Invisible Man* is out of print? I want to have it. Are you going to arrange soon for a uniform edition? There are a good many volumes already to make a fine backing for *Kipps*. I wonder what criticism he will get. I fear that whatever he gets will be unsatisfactory. The worst of our criticism is that it is so barren. Most of our reviewers seem absolutely unable to understand in a book anything but facts and the most elementary qualities of rendering. Thus Wells gets reviewed on the same plane with X. Y. Z. and a hundred others; whereas the whole point is that H. G. Wells is unique in the way he approaches his facts and absolutely distinctive in the way he leaves them.

Our love to you all.

To Mrs. Galsworthy

Pent Farm.
Stanford, Near Hythe, Kent.
21 Oct., 1905.

MY DEAR MRS. GALSWORTHY,

Pardon the blotch!

Jessie being laid up quite with an atrocious headache it falls to my lot to express our pleasure at Chris's [2] noble feeling and behaviour. We have,

[1] *Sur la Pierre Blanche.*

[2] Chris, the black spaniel of John Galsworthy.

as you may have casually remarked, a dog ourselves, whose mental and moral disposition under the trials of this imperfect world is a source of never ending concern and pride.

I don't know whether I ought in the same breath to mention my delight at your approval of "Abeille." [1] I put it in your hands with confidence and trust,—but one never knows. Henceforth I shall dismiss all unworthy fears. I must tell you in confidence that, some time ago, dear Jack sat upon me so heavily for my admiration of *Thaïs* [2] that I promised to myself to walk very delicately in the way of recommending books for the future. I mention this because this very morning I came upon his letter.[3] Its tone of lofty disapproval filled me again with renewed dread and astonishment. I can do the lofty disapproval myself pretty well, but Jack is simply perfect.

Your welcome note contains nothing but good news—it is exactly what we would like letters from people we love always to be. We rejoiced to hear that the little house has been tamed at last and brought to know its masters. But is it tamed enough for the reading of "Abeille" to be accomplished decorously within its doors? It wouldn't be a bad test. I entreat you not to relax your vigilance. Houses are naturally rebellious and inimical to man. As to dear Jack, I picture him to myself outwards, as impassible as fate, facing the loose pages of MS. in the solitude and silence of the dining room. I don't envy him his talent,—the great gift which grows more apparent with every line he writes,—for that would be a sin, but I do envy him the quiet force of his determination, for that is power, a human thing which it is not in human nature to behold without envy.

Our dear love. Always, dear Mrs. Galsworthy, affectionately and obediently yours.

To Mrs. Galsworthy

Pent Farm,
Stanford, Near Hythe, Kent.
2 Nov. 1905.

MY DEAR ADA,

No doubt I wrote stupidly of our coming up. I don't think we can come up before the 15th and I meant to say so. Our most affectionate thanks to you and Jack for inviting us. We will come, but not to stay.

[1] Anatole France's short story.

[2] Anatole France's novel.

[3] Galsworthy's tone of disapproval was subsequently changed to one of admiration.

We could not think of inflicting ourselves upon you while you are still busy "taming up" the little house.

Jessie is better, but of course she remains under the impression of the sore still. Of myself I won't speak. I am writing, like dear Jack, but unlike him I am writing a worthless sort of stuff.

What does Jack think of that political article of mine in the *Fortnightly?*[1] As a piece of prophecy both as to Russia and Germany I think it comes off rather.

I am greatly moved by the news from Russia.[2] Certainly, a year ago, I never hoped to live to see all that. It's just ½ century since the Crimean War, forty-two years since the liberation of the peasants—a great civic work in which even we Poles were allowed to participate. In the words of my uncle's *Memoirs,* this great event opened the way to a general reform of the state. Very few minds saw it at the time. And yet the starting point of orderly rational progress in accord with the national spirit was there!

Jessie sends her dear love. I think I will run up next week for a day and knock at the fierce little house's door, if I may, at about one o'clock.

With love to dear Jack, I remain always
most affectionately yours.

To H. G. Wells

[London.]
32, St. Agnes Place.
28th Nov. '05.

DEAREST H. G.,

We came to London, after my last fit of gout, for a few days; but last Sat. week Mr. Borys became seedy and by Monday developed scarlet fever. We came over here to be near him. He's shut up in a nursing home the London Nurses' Association has in Kensington Pk. Rd. for infectious cases. The Lond [on] Fever Hospital was full.

I don't see him now, but Jessie helps to nurse him, relieving the professional for 3–4 hours every afternoon. The case is not particularly severe. The temperature never went above 100.5 and for the last two days has been normal. But the poor little devil is very weak and unfortunately since yesterday dysenteric symptoms appeared—as I feared they would. I own that this worries me considerably.

This closes the account of the current calamities. What's to come

[1] "Autocracy and War."
[2] The Great Russian Rising of 1905.

next I can't imagine and don't try to. No doubt it will be bad enough when it does come. Meantime I've been writing silly short stories, in which there's no pleasure and no permanent profit. But for temporary purposes they come handy.[1] All the same I am sick of them.

Drop me a line to say how *Kipps* goes off. The few reviews I've seen were partially good tho' not shining with intelligence. Upon a mental review of your career, my dear Wells, I am forced to the conclusion that both kinds of your work are strangely and inexplicably underestimated. Praise of course there is in plenty, but its quality is not worthy of you. And even the attacks, of which one would expect more comprehension, do nothing but nibble at the hem of the mantle. The cause of this (setting aside the superiority of your intelligence) it would be curious to investigate and on those lines a fundamental sort of study upon H. G. Wells could be written. I wish I could liberate my tongue-tied soul. But perhaps what I could find to say if it ever came out would be as disappointing to you as it would be to myself.

Coming to the particular case of the latest book, I must say here this at least: that the high expectation roused instantaneously, as it were, by the sight of the 4th or 5th instalment in the *Pall Mall Magazine* is fulfilled to the very limit of possibility. The book, my dear fellow, is simply admirable in its justness and its justice, in its human and humane quality.[2] Nothing you have written before has approached such perfect proportion or revealed the delicacy of treatment of which you are capable, so well. I would say infinitely more, but must end now with most affectionate congratulations.

To John Galsworthy

1905
26th Dec., London.

DEAREST JACK,

I've been abominably ill. Abominably is the right word.

Ada's letter found me in bed. I thank her very much. I would like to say something nice, but I have got up empty-headed, shaky, and so weak that I can't make the smallest mental effort.

And to-morrow I must start another short story.[3] And I shall, of course, but I dread the to-morrow all the same. And in another 20 days

[1] "Gaspar Ruiz," "An Anarchist," (*A Set of Six*); "Initiation" (*The Mirror of the Sea*).

[2] *Kipps, The Story of a Simple Soul,* had been published serially in *The Pall Mall Magazine* from February to December, 1905.

[3] "The Informer."

or so, the same thing shall turn up again, the same powerlessness of body, the same anguish of mind—I don't say anything of actual bodily pain, for God is my witness, I care for that less than nothing. It is the helplessness, with the bitter sense of the lost days that I stand in fear of. And you know well I don't want these days for myself and that each, each is of the most vital importance.

Our loving thanks for the post cards, which Borys treasures; but I am afraid they shall have to be burnt when he leaves. We expect to move him to the Pent on Saturday. Jessie goes on Friday. The nurse is to take him down and I'll come too probably—unless I stay in London for a few days with Dr. Tebb, to get a little mended. I had a good deal of fever with my third relapse and ugly internal symptoms. I must try to get up some strength, mental and physical, before the next attack comes. Likewise I must write some 20,000 words.

Jessie keeps up pretty well. I've sent her to bed. The poor woman had a particularly joyful time this last fortnight.

Our dear love to you both.

To J. B. Pinker

Montpellier [Hotel Riche]
Monday, 5th March, 1906.

MY DEAR PINKER,

Here's the text of the *M. of the Sea* ready at last. It is surprising how much time was taken up in putting it into some shape; but at any rate the proof corrections are not likely to go beyond the limit fixed by agreement. There will be no printers' bill for me to settle.

With the copy there is a loose leaf containing instructions which should be attended to.

I breathe a prayer for the book's success—the best success a book of that sort can reasonably expect. I'll put in motto and dedication in the first proof of title page, when I get it.

If you can spare me that fifty from the book advance you'll be working towards a happy release from worries. It isn't quite all that is necessary but it'll go a long way towards it. By and by when I've sent you a short story (to follow *Verloc*),[1] there will be an amount of £16, another of about £20 and the income tax to pay. Meantime they must wait.

Verloc has been delayed rather by this *Mirror*. I sat up 3 nights. To have all my stuff in bits and scraps of print like this, confused my mind

[1] *The Secret Agent.*

in a perfectly ridiculous manner. But it's over! For all my efforts at economy I find the money goes quicker than I expected. The only luxury I have allowed myself is to get riding lessons for Borys. I have taken a series of twelve tickets which cost me 25/–. It's wonderful what good they are doing him; he looks a different child already; he was very white and peaked after his scarlet fever, with defective circulation too. Now all this is changed and I credit the horse with this improvement. As the father of a fine boy and a horseman yourself you'll understand my satisfaction at his shaping extremely well. From the very first day he had an excellent seat and a most amusing assurance on horseback. I daresay he inherits the instinct from his Polish ancestors. This week you'll get a further batch of *Verloc*. I don't like to say the final batch—but it's possible. Alas it'll be a longish story: 180,000 words or so, I fear. On the other hand, it is not a bad piece of work. We will see.

To William Rothenstein

Hôtel Riche et Continental
Montpellier
Place de la Comédie
11th March 1906.

MY DEAR WILL,

Many thanks. I am glad to hear that Balfour[1] really likes my work. After all, one writes for the intelligence. As to your wonderful picture whose memory abides with me for ever, the hanging back of buyers distresses me of course, but does not astonish. There is a vigour, a vitality, an energy of conception and execution which naturally scare the usual sugar-stick bourgeois. I flatter myself that my "Typhoon" story is as art somewhere near (if not very near) your admirable picture—in *intention* I mean to say, for to your mastery of technique I can't pretend even to myself. Well, Pinker had the greatest difficulty in placing that story and ultimately had to let it go for a few pence, so to speak, and a really friendly critic writing of it absolutely raised the question whether it was a "fit" subject. *Voilà*.

But neither praise nor blame can affect your undeniable achievement. No doubt you will do better—do greater. But all the same there is in that work a finality of expression which will mark an epoch in your artistic life.

[1] Mr. (now Lord) Balfour.

To John Galsworthy

9th April, 1906,
Riche Hôtel,
Montpellier.

DEAREST JACK,

My prevision is accomplished. Only yesterday talking with Jessie of your play, I said confidently, "Barker'll take it!"[1] And lo and behold! the thing has arrived! I feel quite warmed up by the news. As poor Hope's[2] expression is: "You are a made man."

Garvin notified me of the appearance of the article.[3] He professes himself highly pleased with it, which naturally made me feel very uncomfortable. However, as your letter does not seem to display a deadly animosity, I hope to live it down in time. Seriously, my dearest fellow, my very great regard for that piece of work has stood in my way. I could have written 10,000 words on it. But I had to consider space. I took an unnatural attitude towards the book, for if I had followed my bent I would have required lots of room to spread my elbows in. My natural attitude would have been of course literary,—and perhaps I would have found something not quite commonplace to say,—a critical tribute not unworthy of you. But there was the risk of being misunderstood. So I simply endeavoured to send people to the book by a sort of allusive *compte-rendu,* a mere "notice" in fact. How much it cost me to keep strictly to that is a secret between me and my Maker.

I have also heard that directly on its appearance the book began to be talked about in "journalistic circles." I confess that I felt slightly sick at that, till I reflected that the *quality* of your book was too high to be affected by false admirations. And take it from me, my dear Jack, that the *quality* of your work is very high,—the sort of thing that cannot in good faith be questioned, but that cannot be conveniently expressed in a letter,—and not even in talk, however intimate. Because that last is bound to swerve into considerations of a subject and method fascinating to the limited nature of the human literary mind: whereas that quality is something altogether more subtle, more remote, whose excellent and faithful unity is reflected rather than expressed in the book, yet is as

[1] Granville Barker.

[2] J. C.'s friend, G. F. W. Hope.

[3] "John Galsworthy: An Appreciation," published in the *Outlook* March 31, 1906, under the title "A Middle Class Family," and, entirely forgotten by the author himself later on, was not included, in 1921, in *Notes on Life and Letters.* Re that matter see J. C.'s letter June 8, 1921, p. 259. The article was included in the posthumous volume, *Last Essays.*

absolutely, deeply and unavoidably present in it as the image in the mirror. And there are a very few books only that have this quality. *Don Quixote,* for instance, is one of the few: and you may tell dear Ada that no book of Balzac had that: which is perhaps the reason she has her knife into the poor man,—a sentiment which (however shocking to me) does her definite honour by its mental insight and instinctive delicacy of taste.

The above developed, made as intelligible as can be in the way of feeling and conviction, should have been the fundamental theme of the article I would have liked to write on the *Man of Property,* but I have been wise with a worldly and journalistic wisdom. Perhaps it is only because I mistrusted myself,—who knows? But here you have the shadow of what might have been written in all truth and justice.

As to myself, my dear Jack, I have always that feeling of loafing at my work, as if powerless in an exhaustion of thought and will. Not enough! not enough! And yet perhaps those days without a line, nay, without a word, the hard, atrocious, agonizing days are simply part of my *method* of work, a decreed necessity of my production. Perhaps! But if it is so, then nothing can repay me for such a sombre fate,—not even Pinker's satisfaction with the stuff I send to him. 14,000 words was all I could achieve. It's simply disaster and there's nothing in them, it seems to me, the merest hack novelist could not have written in two evenings and a half. I doubt not only my talent (I was never so sure of that) but my character. Is it indolence,—which in my case would be nothing short of baseness,—or what? No man has a right to go on as I am doing without producing manifest masterpieces. It seems I've no excuse under heaven or on earth. Enough!

We shall be starting off for home in a week or so and then I shall run up at once to see you. I must see you both and get braced up in the contact of your sure friendship and affection. And I must read the play,—must.

Our collective love to you both.

To Messrs. Methuen & Co.

Pent Farm,
30th May, 1906.

DEAR SIRS,

Thanks for your letter with the two missing signs: 9 & 10 and suggestion for title page.

As regards that last my feeling is against half measures. My idea being rejected let us have the usual form. *OF* will not do. I thank

you for the attention paid to my remark; but it was only a remark. *OF* is logical no doubt but it is not expedient. In this connection it is distinctly aggressive and that apparently insignificant departure from the usual is likely to provoke more remark than the radical rearrangement of title page suggested by me. So let us have *BY* and shock no one's preconceived notions.

My feeling is against a red title. Black, providing that the lettering can be made a little heavier, is more to my taste. I leave the final decision to you. Couldn't the words *Mirror of the Sea* be printed in Gothic type? It rests with you.

You ask me for something very difficult. Any definition of one's work must be either very intimate or very superficial. There is only one man to whom I could open my confidence on that extremely elusive matter without the fear of being misunderstood. The intention of temperamental writing is infinitely complex, and to talk about my work is repugnant to me—beyond anything. And what could I say that would be of use to you? I may say that the book is an imaginative rendering of a reminiscent mood. This is a sort of definition and it is true enough in a way. But the book is also a record of a phase, now nearly vanished, of a certain kind of activity, sympathetic to the inhabitants of this Island. It is likewise an attempt to set down graphically certain genuine feelings and emotions born from the experience of a respectable and useful calling, which, at the same time, happens to be of national importance. It may be defined as a discourse (with a personal note) on ships, seamen, and the sea.

All this and much more may be said of it; and pray believe that I regret not being able to answer your demand in a more liberal spirit. Whatever I've written above is in strict confidence. Mr. Conrad *must not be quoted* as having said this or that about his book. But I hope it will be of some use for the note in your catalogue.

To Mrs. Galsworthy

14 Addison Road [1]
London [End of July, 1906.]

MY DEAR ADA,

Your most satisfactory letter delighted us immensely.

We on our part are doing well under your roof. One hot day we have had but no more; and the attentions of your faithful retainers make life

[1] Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Conrad had been lent Mr. and Mrs. John Galsworthy's house for some weeks.

easy for us all. I don't know that I am writing much in the little wooden home,[1] but I smoke there religiously for 3½ hours every morning with sheets of paper before me and an American fountain pen in my hand. What more could be expected from a conscientious author? I can't imagine. Personally I would prefer to hold in my hand a Tyrolese flower in a landscape of mountains at 7 A. M. after breakfast. How delightful it sounds. A breath of cool pure mountain air comes from the pages of your letter and makes me dissatisfied with the pure (but inferior) fragrance of cheap cigarettes.

The temple of your domestic gods is not profaned by sounds of revelry, but still we have visitors. Mrs. Sauter[2] was good enough to come twice, bringing with her the second time Agnes Sanderson, who is said to be enamoured of a son of some High Priest but does not put on insufferable side on that account.

Ladies turn up daily and are taken upstairs to inspect the dry goods store. They come from town and country, from Winchester, from Essex, from Capri and even from Battersea. It is my impression that Jessie has never had such a good time in her life. And they all exclaim at our great luck in such a dear home. It is luck indeed! Too great for words.

Between whiles we live with your portrait pretty considerably. It is a remarkable piece of work. It presides silently at our meals and overlooks Borys' studies. But we discuss it no longer. The last word has been said and it was my boy who said it after a period of contemplation. "How like Mrs. Jack this is, and I hope she will never look like that." Here you have the truth straight from the heart of your admirer.

Pray remember us to your mother.[3] I've read Jack's article in the *Speaker*.[4] Hum! Hum! He had better be careful.

Yours most affectionately.

To Mrs. Galsworthy

14, Addison Road,
[London.]
2nd Aug. 1906.

MY DEAR ADA,

I have lately made the acquaintance of a quiet, unassuming, extremely ugly but upon the whole a rather sympathetic young man. A lady I like

[1] A little summerhouse in the garden.
[2] John Galsworthy's sister.
[3] John Galsworthy's mother.
[4] "Wanted—Schooling in Fiction," an article by John Galsworthy in *The Speaker*, July 14, 1906.

very much introduced him to me and I am very anxious to secure your and Jack's friendly reception for him when you return. His name is John Alexander Conrad and he arrived here at 9.30 A. M. to-day in a modest and unassuming manner which struck me very favourably. His manner is quiet, somnolent, his eyes contemplative, his forehead noble, his stature short, his nose pug, his countenance ruddy and weather-beaten. Altogether I think already that he will be quite a valuable acquisition for our little circle. I feel already (9 P. M.) a good deal of affection for him.

Borys was extremely surprised. He calls him Brother Jack. His mother, whose behaviour is jocose, sends her dear love to you both and her very kind regards to Mrs. Galsworthy [senior] and I join her with all my heart.

From the remark I have heard, "Escamillo will have to be taught that he has two masters now," I conclude that the harmony of the family is not likely to be disturbed. As a matter of fact, besides half of his dog Borys has been busy making over a large share of his property to Brother Jack. I have (as head of the family) sanctioned all these arrangements, which come into force immediately.

Feeling now that you are sufficiently reassured, I refrain from further details for the present. All is well.

Your affectionate friend and servant.

To Mr. and Mrs. Galsworthy

14th August 1906 [London]
(it's really the 15th)

DEAREST JACK AND ADA,

Thanks for your letters. We are so glad you approve of the name. Everything is going on very well, Brother Jack thriving exceedingly and his mother all smiles. She has been up for 2 hours to-day.

I manage to write something nearly every day, but it is like a caged squirrel running in his wheel—tired out in the evening and no progress made. It's very mysterious, that thing. I feel as if I should like to sit down for a couple of years and meditate over the confounded phenomenon.

Sisyphus was better off. He did not get periodically his stone on the top. That it rolled down again is a mere circumstance and I wouldn't complain if I had his privilege. But I roll and roll and don't seem to gain an inch up the slope. And that is distinctly damnable.

Ford,[1] I guess, is being now entertained in America. No doubt they'll feast him on intellectual roast dog. Perhaps his next book will be written with an eagle's feather.

I take note with immense approval of what you say as to your next book. I should like to have a couple of hours tête-à-tête with your copy. A word in your ear: Give up pulling your stuff to pieces overmuch.

Many thanks with our deepest regards to your mother. Jessie's love. I kiss the hand of the gracious lady and shake your horrid inky, literary fingers. You should see mine. The beastly American fountain pen has gone back on me.

To John Galsworthy

Pent Farm
12 Sept. '06, 9 A. M.

DEAREST JACK,

I've got the MS. this morning and before tackling the task of the day I want to thank you for your dear and good letter.

I am no end glad you like the thing generally.

The point of treatment you raise I have already considered. In such a tale[2] one is likely to be misunderstood. After all, you must not take it too seriously. The whole thing is superficial and it is but a tale. I had no idea to consider Anarchism politically, or to treat it seriously in its philosophical aspect; as a manifestation of human nature in its discontent and imbecility. The general reflections whether right or wrong are not meant as bolts. You can't say I hurl them in any sense. They come in by the way and are not applicable to particular instances,—Russian or Latin. They are, if anything, mere digs at the people in the tale. As to attacking Anarchism as a form of humanitarian enthusiasm or intellectual despair or social atheism, that—if it were worth doing—would be the work for a more vigorous hand and for a mind more robust, and perhaps more honest than mine.

The diffuseness, pp. 141 to 151, depending on the state of the writer's health, has been felt, and shall be remedied in the measure of possibility.

As to the beastly trick of style, I have fallen into it through worry and hurry. I abominate it myself. It isn't even French really. It is Zola jargon simply. Why it should have fastened on me I don't know. But anything may happen to a man writing in a state of distraction. We shall see to that with great care when the tale is finished. You'll get a few pages more

[1] Ford Madox Ford [Hueffer].
[2] *The Secret Agent.*

when Pinker returns them to me. The end is not yet, tho' 45 thousand words *are*.

And was Ada *really* interested?

Our dearest love to you both.

To (Sir) Algernon Methuen

Pent Farm.
7 Nov. 1906.

DEAR MR. METHUEN,

Thanks for your letter with enclosures. I quite understand the object of a descriptive note in a catalogue or circular. I have some notion too of the methods of publishing. I am acquainted with one of the very best travellers in the trade. And as to the "notes" in question, poor W. H. Chesson used to write them very skilfully for T. F. Unwin's publications —my own early novels amongst others. I have also a pretty clear idea who wrote these "notes" for Mr. Heinemann and for Messrs. Blackwood. The point is that I was never asked to furnish that sort of thing myself. And I still think that the author is not the proper person for that work.

I've a very definite idea of what I tried to do and a fairly correct one (I hope) of what I *have* done. But it isn't a matter for a bookseller's ear. I don't think he would understand: I don't think many readers will. But that's not my affair. A piece of literary work may be defined in twenty ways. The people who are serializing the *Secret Agent* in the U. S. now have found their own definition. They described it (on posters) as "A Tale of Diplomatic Intrigue and Anarchist Treachery." But they don't do it on my authority and that's all I care for.

I could never have found that. I confess that in my eyes the story is a fairly successful (and sincere) piece of ironic treatment applied to a special subject—a sensational subject if one likes to call it so. And it is based on the inside knowledge of a certain event in the history of active anarchism. But otherwise it is *purely a work of imagination*. It has no social or philosophical intention. It is, I humbly hope, not devoid of artistic value. It may even have some moral significance. It is also Conrad's writing. I should not be surprised if it were violently attacked. And when it is prepared for "book form" it will be 68,000 words in length—or perhaps even more.

In this connection I wanted to ask you whether it would be possible to have the book set up and *galley slips* pulled off for me to work on? I would like it done very much unless the cost of such self-indulgence were ruinous. I would send the type-script at once to you.

I am very sensible of your kind attention in warning me of the 2nd impression in time for corrections. There will be five—3 caused by my own faulty proof reading and 2 typographical errors. You will find them on the enclosed sheet of paper, clearly set out.

To Mr. and Mrs. Galsworthy

31 Dec., 1906 [Montpellier].

DEAR ADA AND JACK,

We end this year with our thoughts directed especially to you two with the greatest affection and gratitude. May you, finding felicity in each other's happiness, go hand in hand through long and serene years with the reward of their praise for good work rightly done and contented hearts in your unselfish lives.

The *"petits cadeaux qui entretiennent l'amitié"* arrived safely the day before yesterday to the great joy of the recipients. Jacklet seems to think the innocuous parrot the greatest joke in the world. Borys communes with the pigs every spare moment. It is considerably more than a *succès d'estime,* I can assure you.

I have not been writing yet, but I've been hatching through all the time, tho' to the outward eye presenting no difference from the other loafers on the Place de la Comédie. Jessie's eyes again trouble her, but I don't think there is any reason for uneasiness. Otherwise we are all well and tolerably frivolous.

I have been correcting and rewriting partly the French translation of "Karain" for book form. A selection of four tales "Karain," "Lagoon," "Outpost" and "Heart of Darkness" will make a volume which the *Mercure de France* declares its willingness to publish in winter 1907.[1] I admit it would flatter my vanity to see myself in French, partly at least of my own translation.

But all this is not serious business of the kind that ought to engage the thoughts of a man of 48 with two kids and a wife to leave behind him —*un beau jour.*

I wish to goodness I could get on terms with *Chance* quickly. Each day is like a stroke of an inexorable clock to me.

Voilà. There's nothing new—except (an important exception) that I have discovered a vol. of Anatole France unknown to us—a work of his younger days.[2] I will be sending it to you in a day or two. Meanwhile much love from us both.

[1] The thing was not done. The French translation of "Karain" only has been published in the *Mercure de France,* under Henry D. Davray's signature.

[2] Probably *Les Désirs de Jean Servien.*

To R. B. Cunninghame Graham

31 Dec., 1906
Riche Hôtel
Montpellier.

TRÈS CHER AMI,

Your letter reached me here and no proof of your friendship could have been more welcome.

I ran here from the Pent in a sort of panic before the menaces of the winter. A horrid, almost suicidal depression sent me off in search of sunshine. We have found it here. The weather is cold, calm, dry, brilliant. I hope I will be able to work and don't want to go back with less than half a book.

And *à propos* of book, in December Edward Garnett said to me "I'll give you Cunninghame Graham's book, but I suppose he will send it to you".—I said "Don't give me his book, I prefer having it from him."

The question is: "Where is the book?" [1]

This, however, is no reproach. It simply explains why I have not read it yet. Mudie is under instruction to send it on to me here. When it arrives I shall swallow it up at a sitting and then write to you.

We have been thinking of you this year. It is sad to think of you feeling your loneliness at this season—though you certainly are a man round whom many affections must be centred, many admirations and even some enmities. To you life must keep its value to the last, and the words you have written, the perfect expression of your rare personality, shall be read in the far future with the disinterested admiration they deserve. Your magnanimous indignations and your human sympathies will be perceived as having made their mark on their time. Words worthy of you, uncompromising and sincere, shall be your descendants and the servants of your memory more faithful than any child could be,—for alas! our children are but men like ourselves with short memories and but an imperfect fidelity to the spirit that has animated our own existence. Exceptional natures are fated to remain alone, but when they possess the gift of noble expression they have and keep a family of their own from generation to generation.

Je vous serre bien tendrement les mains.

[1] *His People,* by R B. Cunninghame Graham. (London, Duckworth, 1906.)

To J. B. Pinker

Riche Hôtel,
Place de la Comédie,
Montpellier, France.
25 Jan., 1907.

MY DEAR PINKER,

Here's a tale of woe. Borys has adenoids—if that's how the beastly things are called. Growths at the back of the nose. The doctor called in to see the baby noticed him standing by open mouthed and advised me to show him to a specialist. This I did and there is no doubt of it. The growth is pretty considerable and will have to be removed. Just now the boy is having a preliminary treatment. Fortunately here in the University town one can command considerable skill at comparatively small cost. In a month's time it will have to be done and the prospect is something of a worry. But his health has been very uncertain for some time now and perhaps that was the cause of this ailing.

But this is not all. Last night at seven I had my pocket picked in a crowd around a man who had been knocked down by a tramcar. Borys and I were in the car and of course were the first in the business of picking the man up—and my pocketbook either fell out or more likely was lifted out; there were 200 francs in it. Please send me a £10 note instanter because life without pocket money is not worth living.

I am putting the last touches to a story which I fancy you will find profitable and not difficult to get rid of either. Subject military. Title: "The Duel." [1] Epoch 1st Napoleon's wars. My modesty prevents me saying that I think the story good. Action sensational. The ending happy.

Don't imagine I am neglecting *Chance*. I've done a lot to it. I won't say a big lot but just fair. Neither will I say I am very pleased with what I've done. It's just tolerable. However, I plod on with that and shall see my ways better presently.

I've been doing the story because I may just as well be doing it as worrying about the other stuff.

I've begun my Spanish lessons. I have been also a few times to the Town Library—with an object. And the object is reading up all I can discover there about Napoleon in Elba.[2]

It seems that there he was surrounded by spies, menaced by murderers and threatened by revengeful Spaniards and Corsicans.

[1] Now in the volume *A Set of Six*.

[2] As a matter of fact, the Montpellier Library in 1907 had only one book about that special period of the life of Napoleon: *Napoléon, roi de l'île d'Elbe*, by Paul Gruyer, which had been acquired the previous year.

I think I've got the theme for a Mediterranean novel with historical interest, intrigue and adventure. There may be even a success in it—who knows? All I want now is to discover the moral pivot—and the thing will be done.

As a matter of fact Louis XVIII was approached with proposals to have the Emperor killed; and the Great Powers were not averse to a project of kidnapping him (by some Spaniards) in the hope—I fancy—of getting a knock on the head in the scuffle. There's something in the subject—for a later day.[1]

To J. B. Pinker

26 Feb., 1907.
[Montpellier]

MY DEAR PINKER,

Borys has got a thundering go at measles. That fellow catches whatever's going. I've been nursing him 2 nights now. No bronchial complication has supervened so far. But you ought not to be surprised if you hear that Baby has got his measles or I, or my wife or Miss Wright or the maid or all of us together. It's the most damnable thing.

Sent me 3 five pound notes please by post—in case of anything.

In regard to my work I am quite aware that *Chance* is the main thing. What I [am] concerned most about is the *Good Work* on that subject. You understand me. I wish to avoid having two versions. Am I to understand you want the MS. of that book now as far as I've gone?

I am extremely unwilling to send it to you. There isn't quite enough to place it on the sample—the more so that it is not a story of intrigue as the *Secret A.* might be regarded. I will make it interesting enough, you may well trust me for that. But please don't place it too soon. I can't afford to botch such effects as my writing is able to produce. I want time. I will of course send you what is ready on my return. I wish to reach a certain point from which I will be able to dictate for a little while. All that part is maturing very fairly, and a month of dictating will give a famous shove to the thing. I intend to give up the month of May to that; which month, by the bye, I wish to spend in London. But of that I will tell you later. Then June, July, Aug., Sept., Oct. in the Pent driving hard, and exclusively, at it, will bring into view the conclusion, which last I tell you franky I haven't got as yet. But by that time it will be there.

Meantime don't imagine I am wasting time by working at the short

[1] The first idea of the book which was to be *Suspense.*

story for Harpers' or elsewhere. On the contrary I am employing the waste time—and I have told you why I am so anxious to utilize the odd hours.

Talking of Harpers'. Pray tell me if (judging from draft of agreement to hand) they refuse to give me any advance. If so, I dislike that attitude very much. It means that they will take the book and then for 10 months we won't see a penny of their money. Drop me a line on the subject and if you say plainly *you wish it* I'll sign the agreement as it stands, but not before.

On the occasion of G. Moore's French trans[lation]: of *Esther Waters* the *Gil Blas,* Par[isian] daily *très chic,* calls me a *powerful seer of visions.* This on the strength of "Karain" alone.[1] A boom in France may have a good effect (by reverberation) at home. I am now shortening "The Duel" for Harpers' or any other magazine. I would have been ready before but for this infernal kick up with measles.

To John Galsworthy

5th March, 1907.
Montpellier

DEAREST JACK,

I had your dear letter and we have your book, for which our thanks and our love. I ought to have written before—but when you have read the news I have to give you, you will not wonder I was not anxious to put pen to paper.

Borys had the measles. This would be nothing if he had not developed symptoms of pneumonia, which, however, passed away, leaving what appeared to be bronchitis. Alas, it seems that he is threatened in both lungs. The doctor imparted to me his fears yesterday. The most terrific part of it was that for the last month, even before he sickened for measles, I myself had a notion of something of the kind—a sort of gnawing fear which I kept from Jessie of course. A sort of slight cold with a little cough hung about him, but he rode and fenced and learned French with great zest and industry and I was reluctant to admit my dread to myself. I had no other ground but the expression of his face, which struck me one evening as he sat opposite me. We were having a game of dominoes and I had the greatest difficulty to finish the hundred. Then I went out and walked about the streets for hours. I managed to quiet myself, but the impression remained. It turns out now that poor Jessie on her side had the same fears—and observed the same discretion. Then came the attack of measles with all the unexpected complications and this

[1] "Karain" had just been published in French in the *Mercure de France.*

thing which the doctor thought was a most persistent bronchitis and now fears is something else. For the last ten days he has got dreadfully thin. We can't get him to eat more than a few mouthfuls and that only he will do for his mother's sake. His pulse keeps between 100–110 and the temperature jumps up and down in the day but is always up at night. The change in his character is also astonishing. But this won't bear being written about.

An analysis would have been made already but we can't get him to expectorate as yet, tho' he is trying his hardest in order to please me. This is the tenth night I haven't slept. I don't mean to say I have had no sleep in all that time, but I hang about his room all night listening and watching. I simply can't go to bed. Then in the afternoon I throw myself down on the sofa and sleep from sheer weariness. For four days I haven't written anything. Jessie is wholly admirable, sharing herself between the two boys with the utmost serenity. She does everything for both. Borys who has been always so considerate is very exacting now. Nothing is right, good or even possible unless the mother is there.

The analysis when it's made will put all doubts to rest—tho' indeed I've but little doubt left for my comfort now. It may be expected that this particular bout may be stopped. Then arises the question: What next? It will, I fear, be impossible to return to England in April. Of school there can be no question just now. I have the idea that perhaps we could take him to Switzerland, to some sanatorium high up for the summer, and then come down to, say, Antibes (on the Riviera) for the winter. At his age everything can be cured. As the doctor told me, "You may have a vigorous young fellow when he's eighteen." But meantime I beat about for some possible scheme of life under this new visitation. If this state is not checked soon, then the whole thing won't last very long, I feel. He doesn't complain of any pain, but he moans in his sleep most pitifully all night: I am writing this in his room. My dear Jack, this is too awful for words. Jessie heroically has gone to bed—for the other must be thought of—leaving her dear love to you both. As to me, I take refuge in the sense of your affection, which seems more priceless in this great trouble.

P. S. I have written to Pinker; please tell Lucas and Edward,[1] to whom I ought to have written but I simply cannot now. Give Ed[ward] my congratulations, my wishes for the success of the play and my love. Ford too sent me his book. I'll try to scrawl a line to him to-morrow.

[1] E. V. Lucas and Edward Garnett.

To J. B. Pinker

Montpellier.
13th March, 1907.

MY DEAR PINKER,

The second laboratory test is also negative. That's all very well, but 1½° of fever every evening and pulse up to 110 must have some cause. One cannot feel quite easy with that. And so far he won't eat anything like enough. However, we are thankful for the small mercies.

The last consultation has taken place. Textually this is what Grasset (a distinguished professor) advises.

Starting from the assumption that there is *no* tuberculosis, he says however that the disposition of the lungs to get so heavily involved ought to be watched. The idea is to make the boy resistant to infection of every sort. Considering also his predisposition to temperature and quick pulse (observed by us for over a year now—ever since scarlet fever) which may be nervous phenomena, he's of the opinion that the best thing for us is not to take him to England yet, but proceed in a month's time to Switzerland—not too high up. Specifically he says Geneva lake would do for climate and altitude and even Geneva town itself. He pointed out to me that there is a school or two in every street almost, so he need not be idle as far as learning something is concerned. He wishes him also to have a hydropathic treatment, very thorough and prolonged, sleep with open windows and so on. I suggested then Champel, a hydrotherapic establishment in the suburbs of Geneva, very modest but enjoying a considerable reputation amongst medical men. I was there myself in 1893 and 1894.[1] Grasset and the other man seemed to think it the very thing.

They have no objection to English climate as such; only to the English climate in the present circumstances. As Grasset said, You tell me he lived a natural life in the country in the open air. Well yet this thing happened. This shows that to be braced up, made resistant to infection and so on, he wants something else, something more. I believe that what he wants he can get in Switzerland in the spring and summer months. If nothing fresh supervenes, take him back to England in winter, if you like. That has no importance. What's important is to brace him up thoroughly at once and fundamentally, without medicaments and invalidism. At his age everything can be mended except an actual organic defect. But when he is fourteen, say, it will not be so easy. You may have him ailing then till he's 17 or 18—to the great detriment of his future.

[1] In 1891 and 1895, exactly.

In Champel he will get his proper cure with special diet and so on. He will want to be fed up. The treatment will stimulate his appetite.—Those are the conclusions of the doctor.

For myself, my dear Pinker, if it is to be Switzerland I much prefer Geneva now than Davos-Platz later on, where the modern Dance of Death goes on in expensive hotels. There's nothing to prevent me writing in Champel (one third of my *Outcast* was written there in 1894) [1] and the place is cheap—as such places go. I myself will not be any the worse for a course of water cure after this earthquake sort of shock. Champel has brought me round once and it may give me a fresh lease of mental life again now that my health shows signs of general improvement. It is 14 months now since my last fit of gout! This is worth following up on the chance of securing permanence. But of course I am not thinking so much of myself as all that—but still . . .

Anyway this is what I think of doing. I want to send Miss Wright and the girl we have with us now back to England as soon as possible. On the other hand, Jessie must have somebody efficient to help look after the baby. Any sort of trained nurse would be too expensive in the long run. Fortunately the servant we had with us for six years offers to come back. She will make up in devotion what she may lack in skill. She has thrown up her situation, kicked over all domestic opposition and is apparently standing bag in hand on the seashore waiting to be called over. Of course we have accepted her offer. A quite sensible saving will be effected by having one person less in the establishment—besides the salary of Miss Wright. It will be felt in hotel bills and travelling, etc. and also in other little ways. Poor Nellie is not an expensive servant. We will have, however, to fit her out in proper clothing here: a matter of 100 or 150 frcs. We think it very much worth while, the more so that we have a positive affection for the girl, who came to us first at the age of 16, quite a child.

I want to start with the other two on the 21st of this month. I will have to go as far as Paris with them and put them into the boat train there. Can't be helped. The uncle of the other will see her off in Dover and I will be at the station in Paris to meet her and start back at once for Montpellier. I leave at 7 P. M. one day and am back at 10 P. M. the next. I hope Borys will be up by the 20th and the extra rooms where he was isolated given up by then. So far baby has escaped both the epidemic of measles in the town and the contagion at home.

Towards the end of March I will begin to send you early pages of *Chance* in MS. For the last 3 days I have written 500 words per day but it will take some work to bring the whole production to that average.

[1] In 1895.

Don't be disgusted if the MS. dribbles in very thin at first. I will have to correct on my own dismal scribble and that takes time. It's no use parting with stuff which may require weeks of correcting work. Moreover, when I have it by me a lucky idea occurs and is set down in its place; whereas when the MS. is not there it is lost because my brain has no storage room.

The "Duel" will complete a very full vol: of short stories. It is always a reserve. I don't say anything more about it, but if need arises it could be used to wind up my affairs at the Pent. It's sure to be worth £200 or so and I think that some £90 would settle everything there. The house must be kept on yet. Its £27 a year taxes included.

But of all that later. I don't think *Chance* will be delayed by a single day. I shall buckle to it exclusively. I don't want to see the proofs of the *Secret Agent* till June, when the other has been shoved well forward.

To John Galsworthy

Riche Hôtel.
Montpellier.
6th May, 1907.

DEAREST JACK,

I didn't write before because of horrid gout. It has come back after an interval of 18 months and has depressed me frightfully. No luck.

I am glad you think I've done something. It's but 50,000 words of rubbishly twaddle,—and it's far from enough. Very far. I am sinking deeper and deeper. The state of worry in which I am living,—and writing,—is simply indescribable. It's a constant breaking strain. And you know that materials subjected to breaking strain lose all elasticity in the end,—part with all their "virtue" on account of profound molecular changes. The molecular changes in my brain are very pronounced. It seems to me I have a lump of mud, of slack mud, in my head. The only bright spot in my existence is your success. I am glad to hear you are about to tackle the subject of your fourth play. That's the way! Now you must affirm yourself by sheer weight of your work. But the intention of going then to a novel is also very good. What novel?

We are going to Champel *près* Genève on the 15th. I will send you the address of the hotel.

I am suffering a good deal of pain yet in my left wrist. Have been in bed, feeling very beastly for five days. The nervous collapse is considerable. Can't react somehow. I drag about with an arm in the sling, hopeless, spiritless, without a single thought in my head. Borys is cough-

ing a lot and I avow that the sound robs me of the last vestiges of composure. I don't mean to say that I show this. I don't. But you and Ada may be told.

Jessie, what between the two boys and myself, has her hands very full. She sends her tender love. Little Jack thrives. He's a joyous little soul. We have no house to come back to. Of course there is the Pent. The difficulty would be to get away from it. I don't see my way to anything just now. The only thing perfectly clear is that we can't live there any longer.

Thanks ever so much for the book received a fortnight ago.

To J. B. Pinker

Hôtel de la Poste,
Genève.
18th May, 1907.

MY DEAR PINKER,

Thank you very much for the money sent. If I telegraphed on the 14th, it was because our rooms were let already and had to be vacated. Moreover, I had a compartment reserved in the train for the 15th. I have miscalculated my expenses in Montpellier and must ask you to send frcs. 1100 by means of Crédit Lyonnais to *Mr. Joseph Ducailler,* Riche Hôtel, Montpellier, in the course of the week. I left that much in his debt. And please don't scold me, because I have just now as much as I can bear. Here I am stranded again with baby at its last gasp with whooping cough. It began in Montpellier. We started by medical advice, counting on the change of climate to check the disease, but it has developed on the road in a most alarming manner. The poor little devil has melted down to half his size. Since yesterday morning he has had a coughing fit every quarter of an hour or so and will not eat anything. We'll have to resort to artificial feeding very soon. Of course *la Roseraie Hôtel*[1] won't take us now. We stick here isolated at the end of a corridor. Really I haven't got my share of the commonest sort of luck. I suppose *Chance* will have to pay for all this. But if you think I ought to come home I will do so as soon as baby can travel, and will let my cure go to the devil. Borys of course has whooping cough too, but very mildly. Still, it isn't good for him. My dear Pinker, I feel that all this is almost too much for me.

[1] The hotel where Conrad had stayed in 1891 and 1895.

I am trying to keep a steady mind and not allow myself to dwell too much on the cost of things or I would go distracted.

The proofs of *S.*[*ecret*] *A.*[*gent*] have reached me, and I have almost cried at the sight. I thought it was arranged beyond doubt that I was to have *galley slips* for my corrections. Instead of that, I get the proofs of set pages! Apart from the cost of corrections, which will be greatly augmented through that, there is the material difficulty of correcting clearly and easily on small margins. And upon my word, I don't want just now any extra difficulties put in the way of my work. I am hurt at Methuen disregarding my perfectly reasonable wishes in such a manner. If Alston Rivers can always furnish galley proofs to Hueffer, Methuen could well do that much for me. I feel their carelessness in this matter as a slight. Please tell them on the telephone from me that I have no photograph to send them. They bother me for that.

In the circumstances, after reflecting on the best way of dealing with the *S. A.*, I think I *must* curtail my corrections as much as possible. I have begun to correct and shall be sending you the first signatures as I finish them off. Meantime I shall lay *Chance* aside entirely—either the writing or the copying. The delay won't be long. Don't let your editor in the States slip away. Promise him a big lot of stuff by September. You can do that safely.

The *S. A.* approached with a fresh eye does not strike me as bad at all. There is an element of popularity in it. By this I don't mean to say that the thing is likely to be popular. I merely think that it shows traces of capacity for that sort of treatment which may make a novel popular.

As I've told you my mind runs much on popularity now. I would try to reach it not by sensationalism but by means of taking a widely discussed subject for the *text* of my novel. Apart from religious problems the public mind runs on questions of war and peace and labour. I mean war, peace, labour in general, not any particular form of labour trouble.

My head is in such a state that I don't know whether I make my idea clear. In short, my idea is to treat those subjects in a novel with a sufficiently interesting story, whose notion has come into my head lately. And of course to treat them from a modern point of view. All this is vague enough to talk about, but the plan in my mind is fairly definite. I will hurry on with that directly I've done with *Chance*. There is no time to lose.

Please drop me a line on receipt of this. I feel most awfully lonely and am putting all my trust in you to see me through.

To William Rothenstein

28th May, 1907.
Hôtel de la Roseraie,
Champel, Genève.

DEAR WILL,

You must forgive me,—us,—our long silence. I am ashamed and tired of sending tales of woe,—endless, everlasting,—to my friends. And there is never anything else to say.

We went to Montpellier for some 3 months,—not from self-indulgence but to make sure, to confirm if possible the improvement which a first visit there caused in my gouty state. Our intention was to return in March, send Borys to school and settle down to work with renewed strength and better hopes.

Early in February Borys fell ill with measles. An attack of extreme severity and made remarkable by the very exceptional case of a relapse. Lung complications set in,—with an aspect so menacing that I may say we have looked the very spectre in the face. When I tell you that all this dragged for weeks, consultations, bony faces, laboratory tests and so on, you may imagine how we felt. However,—in the language of the official analyst: *les bacilles de Koch n'existent pas.* But the boy was so shaken up that the return to England was for the moment out of the question. The medical authorities advised us to take him to Switzerland to set him up and repair generally his constitution by a course of hydropathy. We selected Champel and waited in the south for the beginning of the season.

We waited, nursing him up slowly into some strength, when at the end of April the luckless little devil caught whooping cough. The baby too. However, we started for here. And we are here! I wonder the people took us in. Poor baby is simply melting away in our hands. It's a heartbreaking business to look at him. But this is not all. Four days ago Borys, who has really never been himself since that attack of measles, got laid hold of by an attack of rheumatism in both ankles. *Comprenez-vous?* He is being stuffed with salicylate.

Fortunately the fever is not very high, about 100°. He is as plucky with the pains as it is possible to be. And all this time with a whooping cough which jerks him all over as he lies in bed. I break into cold perspiration whenever I hear him cough, for I know how horrible is the pain of a jarred rheumatic limb.

Voilà! Jessie has been simply heroic in the awful Montpellier adventure, never giving a sign of anxiety not only before the boy, but

even out of his sight; always calm, serene, equable, going from one to the other and apparently never tired though cruelly crippled by her leg, which is not in a good condition, by any means. But how long she will last at it I don't know. I caught her the other evening dropping a tear over little Jack. He is indeed a pitiable object to see.

But enough of this. What will happen next I don't know. I managed to finish a 30,000-word story (since the New Year),[1] am going on with a new novel,[2] and am preparing for the press (in book form) the one I finished for serial publication October.[3] And all this does not amount to much. I need not tell you that I am ruined for this year by all these complications. All my plans are knocked on the head, plans of work, hopes of a publishing success. And next year I'll be fifty!—No! we did not write: we thought of you often tho': and you must never doubt our affection.

To John Galsworthy

6 June '07
Hôtel de la Roseraie
[Champel] Genève.

DEAREST JACK,

Borys is very plucky with the pain. I believe he cried a little to his mother once, but never before me who am his principal attendant. It's I who break into a cold sweat when I hear a beastly fit of whooping cough shaking him all over,—with his four rheumatic joints. However there are only three now: both wrists and one elbow. He has no more pain in his feet, but they are no use whatever as yet. This has been going on for a fortnight nearly: the temperature from 100° to 101°. He hasn't lost his pluck, but he's losing his spring and lies very quiet and resigned, all eyes as to his face and skin and bone as to the body. I read to him all day and attend to him the best I can with one arm, because my left, since my last gout, isn't much use: and what I can do with it is done at the cost of a good deal of pain. Now and then I steal an hour or two to work at preparing the *Secret Agent* for book form. And all this is ghastly. I seem to move, talk, write in a sort of quiet nightmare that goes on and on. I wouldn't wish my worst enemy this experience.

Poor little Jack has melted down to nothing in our hands. He, however, seems to have turned the corner. But all his little ribs can be seen

[1] "The Duel."
[2] *Chance.*
[3] *The Secret Agent.*

at a glance. To-day he smiled very distinctly the first time in the last 30 days or so, and with a pathetically skinny little paw reached for my nose nippers. I mention these favourable symptoms lest you should think this letter unduly pessimistic.

From the sound next door (we have three rooms) I know that the pain has roused Borys from his feverish doze. I won't go to him. It's no use. Presently I shall give him his salicylate, take his temperature and shall then go to elaborate a little more the conversation of Mr. Verloc with his wife. It is very important that the conversation of Mr. Verloc with his wife should be elaborated,—made more effective, don't you know,—more *true* to the situation and the character of these people.

By Jove! I've got to hold myself with both hands not to burst into a laugh which would scare wife, baby and the other invalid,—let alone the lady whose room is on the other side of the corridor!

To-day completes the round dozen of years since I finished *Almayer's Folly*.[1]

And in this connection how is Edward?[2] What about his play? I have had no letter from anyone since your last. And I've written to no one except to Pinker,—and just a word to Rothenstein for decency's sake.

My love to you both. This letter requires no answer. But, indeed, you may write all the same, write of yourselves, of your work, of the subject of the last play and of the novel which is to follow.

To John Galsworthy

17 June, 1907
[Champel].

DEAREST JACK,

Borys does not get on at all. Symptoms of bronchitis at the top of left lung have declared themselves since the 15th, and there is the pleurisy too. With this a hectic fever well characterized and rapid emaciation with a cough. It is his 22nd day in bed. Things could not look much more ugly. Another doctor is coming this afternoon.

I am keeping up, but I feel as if a mosquito bite were enough to knock me over. Good God! If I were to get it now, what would happen! As it is I don't know very well what will happen. It will be nothing good

[1] *Almayer's Folly* had been finished in May, 1894—*thirteen* years before.
[2] Edward Garnett,

anyway,—even at best. And how to face it mentally and materially is what keeps my nerves on the stretch.

I thought I had told you I was setting the *Secret Agent* for book form. There was an additional chapter to write. That's done. Two chapters to expand—which I am now trying to do. Impossibility to get away from here. Dread of going back to the Pent: a sort of feeling that this is the end of things at the end of twelve years' work,—all this does not help me much in making Mr. & Mrs. Verloc effective for the amusement of a public,—which won't be amused by me at all.

Generally the position does not stand being thought about. So no more of it.

To John Galsworthy

30 July, '07.
Hôtel de la Roseraie
[Champel] Genève.

DEAREST JACK,

At last I can tell you that Borys's convalescence may be considered as ended. The period of picking up strength has begun. We had various alarms, but that seems all over now. It has been altogether a ghastly time,—from the 15th May to the 15th July. In that time I've written roughly speaking 28 to 30,000 words in order to make a decent book of the *Secret Agent*.

I think it's pretty good—for what it is. The pages you've marked for cancellation (or cancelling?) in the typescript are retained after a proper amount of thinking over. They fall in pretty well with the ironic scheme of the book,—and the public can skip if it likes.

We return soon. My health is comparatively good, but my anxieties have been increased by all that happened in the last four or rather five months. We shall try to pick up the old existence, somewhat nearer London than the Pent. But everything is difficult in my position. I look forward with dread to an effort which, I fear, from the nature of things, can never any more be adequate.

It shall be made of course, but the feeling itself is against the probability of success. Art, truth, expression are difficult enough by themselves,—God knows!

I am anxious to see you. Let it be soon after my return. But I don't suppose you'll be in London then. I don't know exactly the plan of your movements. Our very dear love to you both.

To J. B. Pinker

30 July, 1907.
Hôtel de la Roseraie
Geneva.

MY DEAR PINKER,

Thanks for the money. The book I think is a book to produce some sensation.[1] I don't say it is good, but I say it is the best I could do with the subject. In the 2 months of the boy's illness I managed to write into it some 26–28,000 words. After that I imagine I can do anything; for you can have no idea of my mental state all that time. Besides the anxiety for the child, there was the tearing awful worry of the circumstances.

After getting back to the Pent the great thing will be to get away from there as soon as possible, and make a fresh start.

There will be the house hunting. Perhaps we may get something near Ashford to make the moving less expensive. If you hear of any inexpensive sort of house in the country near London make a note of it for us.

I reckon 4 months for *Chance* counting from 1st of Augst. for I am not going house hunting as you may imagine. At the Pent I will go to work. But it is of the utmost importance for me to get settled for good. Moreover the Pent is damnably expensive to live in. The idea is to have no bills. One spends always more than one intends to do. But all this will not be possible till we've got clear of the place.

I think I can say safely that the *Secret Agent* is *not* the sort of novel to make what comes after more difficult to place. Neither will it, I fancy, knock my prices down. *Chance* itself will be altogether different in tone and treatment of course, but it will be salable I believe. By the end of Sept[er] you will have a really considerable lot of it to show. Of course it will not be on popular lines. Nothing of mine can be, I fear. But even Meredith ended by getting his sales. Now, I haven't Meredith's delicacy, and that's a point in my favour. I reckon I may make certain of the support of the Press for the next few years. The young men who are coming in to write criticisms are in my favour so far. At least all of whom I've heard are. I don't get in the way of established reputations. One may read everybody and yet in the end want to read me—for a change if for nothing else. For I don't resemble anybody; and yet I am not specialized enough to call up imitators as to matter or style. There is nothing in me but a turn of mind which, whether valuable or worthless, cannot be imitated.

[1] *The Secret Agent.*

It has been a disastrous time. You must help me settle down now on an economical basis. It will cost something to do that but, that once done, 3 years of close sitting will do the trick. I'll be then 52 and not worn out yet as a writer. Without exaggeration I may say I feel renovated by my cure here—and, considering the adverse circumstances, this seems a good sign. I am anxious to get back and drive on.

We could start from here on the 10th. I would like to start on that date. I would go on the 8th, providing always you pay the people in Kent before I return, in accordance with the enclosed list. . . . No more trips abroad. I am sick of them.[1]

To Henry James [2]

Someries, Luton.
20. Sept., 1907.

TRÈS CHER MAÎTRE,

I am sending you my latest volume.[3] Receive it with the indulgence which cannot be refused to a profound and sincere sentiment prompting the act. The covers are deep red I believe. As to what's inside of them I assure you I haven't the slightest idea. That's where Hazlitt's Indian Juggler has the pull over a writer of tales. He at least knows how many balls he is keeping up in the air at the same time.

I've heard from the Imperatively Necessary Pinker of your kind inquiries. To know that your thought is sometimes turned towards me and mine is deeply comforting. Perhaps J. B. P. told you that this year in France we had in the words of the parrot—"a hell of a time." In 8 months poor Borys managed to achieve two serious illnesses. *Enfin!*

Notwithstanding that he only got up from the last 7 weeks ago, I took him up yesterday to a small school in the neighbourhood. And I miss him exceedingly to-day.

We have abandoned the Pent to its green solitude;—*to its rats.* There's a chapter closed. The new one opens much nearer London—less than 40 minutes—and many trains a day. When you come up for your London period you must extend it periodically as far as the Someries—any day when the conjunction of the planets and your inclination point

[1] In fact, Conrad did not leave England for the following seven years till the month of July, 1914; when he went to Poland.

[2] Of the letters which Joseph Conrad wrote to Henry James since 1897, this one only and a letter dated December 12, 1908 (see p. 91) have been discovered. We are indebted to Mr. Henry James, nephew of the late novelist, for their communication.

[3] *The Secret Agent.*

favourably to my request. *N'est-ce pas?* You would not deprive the boy of the privilege of boasting to his descendants that he has seen Henry James under his father's roof. It would be downright cruelty, considering what a scanty store of glamour I am likely to leave to him otherwise.

A vous de cœur.

To J. B. Pinker

Friday, Sept., '07.
Someries, Luton,
Beds.

MY DEAR PINKER,

Thanks for your letter ever so much. I was not unduly impressed by the *Country Life* slating. I could write a jolly sight better slating myself of that book—something that *would* get home on to its defects.

As to "A Duel" I think that McClure's notion is not half bad.[1] How would that move affect the chances of vol. form publication *here* by and bye? Of course a vol. of short stories in Un. States could not include that one. If the conditions they propose are good I should say: Yes! Certainly. I like you to advise me of what is being done, but you understand very well that the decision rests always with you. My position is this: While I am writing I am not thinking of money. I couldn't if I would. The thing once written I admit that I want to see it bring in as much money as possible and to have as much *effect* as possible.

Talking of effect. Is the *S[ecret] A[gent]* producing any on the public? I wish I knew, mainly for this reason, that if there's going to be a second edition soon (or at all) I would like to correct a few horrid misprints there are—if that can be done.

Graves [2] wrote me a nice letter a day or two ago. Who is the Buchan you mention in yours? Is he John Buchan who used to write in *B'wood's* 3 years ago? Graves is a good friend to have—apart from being a sympathetic person to know. Lucas wrote to me too with enthusiasm. A. J. Dawson also—only yesterday. But from Ed. Garnett I haven't heard privately, tho' I know he is to review the book somewhere. I am not well enough to ask you to arrange a meeting with Dr. Robertson Nicholl yet, but I should like to have a sight of him. Is Ford's book gone into 2nd edition already, as I hear [3]—not from him tho'! Jack's play [4]

[1] The publication by the McClure Company of "The Duel" alone. It was done in 1908 under the title, "The Point of Honour."

[2] A. P. Graves.

[3] It refers to *Privy Seal: His Last Venture,* by Ford Madox Ford [Hueffer]. (Alston Rivers, London, 1907.)

[4] "Joy," by John Galsworthy.

has been abused all round I am informed. I dreaded something of the kind. Still that means nothing. His triumph with "Strife" will be all the greater.

To John Galsworthy

Someries, Luton.
Friday. [September] 1907.

DEAREST JACK,

What you say of the reception of "Joy" confirms me in the dismal conviction that a work of art is always judged on other than artistic grounds in this imperfect world. I imagine how much your altruism is aware of your actor's disappointment. But actors have compensations of their own for such misadventures. I ask myself, however, whether you do not exaggerate the magnitude of the misadventure aforesaid.

And in any case it does not matter. Besides we must see yet what the public will do. It does not always endorse the verdict of the critics. I regret bitterly not having been in the house for the première. I sit here and fret and keep on exasperating myself, thinking of your work and mine. No matter. No matter, for the murmurs against "Joy" shall be drowned in such a shout around "Strife" as this country has not heard for a hundred years or more. That is not only my conviction but my feeling, and absolutely overpowering feeling. You've got only to sit tight and watch your glory approaching.

Of all the criticisms, I've seen only the *Daily Telegraph's*. It is condemnation of course,—the condemnation of a man who is mainly disconcerted. He (they) expected you to write "The Silver Box" for ever and ever. Being disconcerted he cannot see the higher artistic quality of "Joy." It is a yelp of astonishment more than anything else. It is of course possible that "Joy" is less theatrical (in the proper sense) than "The S. B." I can't tell, not having seen the performance. But it is possible. The good creatures would naturally resent that with all the force of their simple feelings. Not seeing the surface qualities they expected, they cry out,—a chorus.

To tell you the real truth I had a suspicion that something of the kind might happen. I had it in Montpellier as I read the play. But I said nothing of it to you. I spoke about the play which is good, and not about the critics,—who are what they are. It seemed to me clear that the qualities of "The S. B." being on the surface and the qualities of "Joy" being hidden deep in the interaction of delicate feelings, there was that risk to run. You have run it. It had to be.

I demur to your saying that it is good for one. It is neither good nor bad. In the phraseology of Mr. Vladimir [1] I am inclined to ask, "Why are you saying that,—from morality,—or what?" Your activity having become as it were an ingredient of my mental life, I can judge with the intimacy of a kindred spirit and with the detachment of a separate individuality. It is just nothing to one,—the one being you. The superficiality of blame can in no sense be more valuable than the superficiality of praise. You've had both,—for indeed "The S. B." had a sufficiency of the latter. But there is in your work the sort of merit which escapes the standards of current criticism, with its formulas of thought and the formulas of expression.

Nevertheless, that merit will always be felt present under the vain words babbling of success or failure. It is your possession,—and the rest is just nothing.

In "Strife," that merit, that "virtue" of the gift, the hidden essence of your great talent reaches an extraordinary force of feeling and an amazing felicity of conception,—a thing infinitely greater than mere felicity of expression. Of that last it can be said that it is just to the conception,—and no more can be said. Thus nothing jars that obscure sense of the fitness of things we all carry in our breast and the whole drama develops its power over our emotions irresistibly and harmoniously, to a point where the shallowest mind must receive the impression of depth, and the stoniest heart the impression of pity.

We are settled,—up to a certain point. Settled enough at any rate to be ready for your visit. I am very anxious to see you before you leave town,—and I am not fit to travel, feeling extremely anyhow. That's the reason I don't ask for a seat yet. I had a friendly letter from Lucas [2] and another from Graves about the *S.*[*ecret*] *A.*[*gent*]. Not a word from Edward [3] tho'. I suppose he thinks I don't care. He's wrong. I do. . . . Do you really mean that the *S. A.* has made a mark? And what is *making a* mark?

Our dear love. *Au revoir* soon.

[1] A character in *The Secret Agent.*
[2] E. V. Lucas.
[3] Edward Garnett.

To Edward Garnett

Note. If you wish it typed
send it to *Pinker* with
enclosed note. Talbot House
Arundel Street.

Tuesday, 4. P. M.
[October, 1907]

DEAR CHIEF,

(For you are the Cabecilla of the Brave Guerillos)—here's my escopette ready to go off.[1] I've loaded it with a handful of pretty nasty slugs. Do you see to it that it is fired off properly by some steady hand. And look here: no censorship! It's *that* or nothing. I could not make it shorter. I am long because my thought is always multiple,—but it is to the point anyhow. And I haven't spoken from a literary point of view. *You* can do that admirably. But as I love you I'll allow you to shorten what's necessary. Indeed the thing wants looking through carefully in proof. Only don't take the gems out. No gem must be taken out. I am proud of my powers of stately invective combined with that art of putting the finger to the nose. It's a fascinating mixture. Don't you go censoring it too much,—Your sagacious letter (one would think a piece of Macaulay) was not much to the point. You remember always that I am a Slav (it's your *idée fixe*) but you seem to forget that I am a Pole. You forget that we have been used to go to battle without illusions. It's you, Britishers, that "go in to win" only. We have been "going in" these last hundred years repeatedly, to be knocked on the head only—as was visible to any calm intellect. But you have been learning your history from Russians no doubt. Never mind. I won't say any more or you'll call it a mutiny and shoot me with some nasty preface perhaps. I am now going to inspect your manner of carving into small pieces the Censor of Plays. Book just arrived.

To R. B. Cunninghame Graham

Someries. Luton. Beds.
7th Oct., 1907.

TRÈS CHER AMI,

I am sorry you've left town already. We have just got into this new house and were anxious to see you under its fairly weather-tight roof. It is very accessible from London. Many trains, and some under 40

[1] The article, "The Censor of Plays," which appeared in the *Daily Mail* and was reprinted later on in *Notes on Life and Letters*.

minutes, and only 2½ miles from Luton. It's a farmhouse on the Luton Hoo Estate belonging to that knight-errant, Sir Julius Wernher. A flavour of South Africa and Palestine hangs about our old walled garden —but it is not intolerably obtrusive.[1]

I am glad you like the *S. Agent.*[2] *Vous comprenez bien* that the story was written completely without malice. It had some importance for me as a new departure in *genre* and as a sustained effort in ironical treatment of a melodramatic subject,—which was my technical intention.

Mr. Vladimir was suggested to me by that scoundrel Gen: Seliwertsow whom Padlewski shot (in Paris) in the nineties. Perhaps you will remember, as there were peculiar circumstances in that case. But of course I did him *en charge.*

Every word you say I treasure. It's no use, I cannot conceal my pride in your praise. It is an immense thing for me, however great the part I ascribe to the generosity of your mind and the warmth of your heart.

But I don't think that I've been satirizing the revolutionary world. All these people are not revolutionaries,—they are shams. And as regards the Professor, I did not intend to make him despicable. He is incorruptible at any rate. In making him say: "Madness and despair,—give me that for a lever and I will move the world," I wanted to give him a note of perfect sincerity. At the worst he is a megalomaniac of an extreme type. And every extremist is respectable.

I am extremely flattered to have secured your commendation for my Secretary of State and for the Revolutionary Toddles. It was very easy there (for me) to go utterly wrong.

By Jove! If I had the necessary talent I would like to go for the true anarchist, which is the millionaire. Then you would see the venom flow. But it's too big a job.

I have been thinking of your empty house. We must steel our hearts. Living with memories is a cruel business. I, who have a double life, one of them peopled only by shadows growing more precious as the years pass—know what that is.

I have had the new ed. of *Sta. Teresa* sent down for a leisurely rereading. It seems no end of years since I first read this wonderful book, —the revelation for *"un profane"* of a unique saint and a unique writer. *Tempi passati!*

My wife sends her affectionate regards. We had a most atrocious time abroad, both children ill and Borys very seriously too. Do let me know when you are coming south again.

Toujours à vous de cœur.

[1] As a matter of fact, Sir Julius Wernher was originally a pure German.

[2] *The Secret Agent* had just been published in book form by Methuen & Co.

To J. B. Pinker

Someries, Luton.
10 Oct., '07.

MY DEAR PINKER,

With the exception of my first 2 books, I think, the publishing house of Baron Tauchnitz has refrained from publishing any of my work. Meantime it has acquired almost every piece of rubbishly fiction you may think of that fell from the press. Considering the literary value of my work, as determined by the consensus of critical opinion in England and the U. S., I have accustomed myself to look upon my exclusion in the light of a distinction.

I am not inclined to forego this distinction for the sake of £20. I recognize the special, eminent standing of Baron Tauchnitz's collection. But I have my own standing too. I cannot allow a publishing house, so much in the public eye, to take two of my early works, then ignore seven as if they were unworthy or unfit to have a place in that great (and indiscriminating) collection—and suddenly offer to include the tenth.

And the books that can't be found in the *Collection of British Authors* under Baron Tauchnitz's imprint include the *Nigger, Youth, Lord Jim, Mirror of the Sea,* the very corner stones of my reputation, the best part of seven years of my literary life!

As a friend you'll understand my feeling. To be excluded from the Tauchnitz collection *is* a distinction for Joseph Conrad, whose place in English Literature is made. To come at the call of Baron Tauchnitz after 8 years of neglect is not to be thought of. None of my work shall appear with my consent in the Tauchnitz collection, unless the head of that eminent firm agrees to include at least the four works mentioned above, which he was ill-advised enough to neglect.

As my agent, I beg you to put my view before the representative of Baron Tauchnitz in this country, in order that the firm should be fully advised of my decision.

Can you work this line? I need not tell you that I feel very strongly in that matter. The above is written so that you could communicate it in full where it would get home. I really and truly feel that I had rather not, unless the other books were there too. Of course if you think I must take the money! Anyway I don't think that to be in the Collection is very good from a business point of view. It must affect the sale of royalty copies in a measure.

Have you the stomach for that negotiation? I believe you are quite up to the diplomatic feat. We want only to be very dignified. Of course I would renounce my part of remuneration for the four books. B'wood

would want something no doubt. Should T. have his knife in Heinemann, you could make concessions. Drop the *Nigger* for instance—and be content with 3 books. Or else we could put forward *Nostromo*. But it is really absurd that all the body of my work should be out of the Collection. It's insulting.

To John Galsworthy

Someries, Luton, Beds.
24 Oct., '07.

DEAREST JACK,

I am glad Ada and you found the story tolerable. This in fact is my idea of historical romance put into a short form to try my hand at it.[1]

I've not been able to get from Pinker your article on myself. I am interested but neither anxious nor impatient, for I've great confidence in your judgment and I enjoy in anticipation the reading of something about myself which I know is truly felt and warmly expressed.

My article on the Censor[2] was not bad: stately invective and contemptuous derision (*vulgo:* thumb to the nose) mingled in skilful doses to express an honest indignation. What you've seen was only the shadow of a shade. It was first censured by Edward (by permission I admit) and afterwards by the *Daily Mail* gang,—whoever they are,—as too long, I suppose. And length is an element of force,—an influence in itself. Else why do we all yearn for long reviews? But I dare say I was not gentlemanly enough (being very much in earnest), and as the sagacious Edward observed "we mustn't provoke a reaction in his (the Censor's) favour." I didn't see the matter in the same light, but I did not discuss the point for fear that Edward (who declares himself Irish) should tell me that (as a Slav) I know nothing of the English temper in controversy. To me it seems that if the cause be good the blows should be stout and that if you mean to down a man you don't avoid hitting him under the jaw for fear of "provoking a reaction." In so far the Censor is estimable; he in his 12 years of office was not afraid of "provoking reaction." I suppose that he knew what he was doing when he choked off d'Annunzio, that dreary, dreary *saltimbanque* of passion (out of his original Italian of which I know *nothing*), and Maeterlinck, the farceur, who has been hiding an appalling poverty of ideas and hollowness of sentiment in wistful baby-talk,—two consecrated reputations, not to speak of the sacrosanct Ibsen, of whom, like Mrs. Verloc of Ossipon, I prefer to say nothing. The refusal to pass Barker's play in the face of the first attack increases

[1] The tale, "The Duel" (in *A Set of Six*).
[2] "The Censor of Plays" (in *Notes on Life and Letters*).

my esteem for that imbecile. But his office is an ugly anachronism, a thing *per se* unworthy, and should be abolished on that ground, not because it stands in the way of Messrs. d'Annunzio, Maeterlinck and Ibsen or even E. Garnett and G. Barker. I therefore mentioned not one of these gentlemen, but tried to overwhelm the institution by an attack on its contemptible and ridiculous character, pushed on ruthlessly it is true, but based strictly on the dignified declaration (I like it much) of which you sent me a copy. I thought it was going to be real warfare,—but I fear it's nothing more deadly than a literary flutter. Anyhow, ask Edward to send or show you the original draft which (I am told) he has kept by him,—in the munificent chest of the Cearne (that Celtic stronghold) —for the wonder of future ages,—I presume.

Incidentally too I've learned that after 12 years of work (spoken of by the public press in the way you know) Mr. J. Conrad cannot command space for 1,000 words in a newspaper nor even for once: and that he is to be cut about by the *Daily Mail* young man in the same way as Mr. Jones's or Mr. Robinson's (of Maida Vale or Finsbury) letters to the Editor are. As I don't suffer from swelled head this sort of nauseous medicine has not done me any good.

The *Secret Agent* has run his little race with the moderate triumph of two editions. I go on with *Chance* convulsively as a jaded horse may be made to gallop,—and I fear it's all extravagant trash,—the trash and the extravagance of despair. Pages *must* be written,—so I write them,— and I haven't even the comfort to think I am writing them fast enough.

Our love. When are you coming back?

To John Galsworthy

Someries, 29 Oct., 1907.

DEAR JACK,

The reading of your article[1] soothed my spirit of profound discontent. The thing is magnificently all right in its general considerations. As to their application to my personality, it is not for me to say. A too protesting modesty would be uncivil to you. To show all my gratification would be perhaps indecent. But since your friendship is too sincere to deal in anything but truth, I will tell you that I am glad the truth is *this* and no other. There are sentences I would bind about my brow like a laurel wreath and rest content.

I won't say any more just now. I want to come very soon and talk to you. I would ask you at once to eliminate the word aristocracy, when you

[1] "Joseph Conrad, A Disquisition," by John Galsworthy, which was published in the *Fortnightly*, 1908.

see the proof. The name has never been illustrated by a senatorial dignity, which was the only basis of Polish aristocracy. The Equestrian Order is more the thing. Land-tilling gentry is the most precise approach to a definition of my modest origin. As English publications reach far and wide notwithstanding the Censorship, I am anxious not to be suspected of the odious ridicule of passing off myself for what I am not. I'll talk to you more of that when we meet. The correction I ask for will spoil the sentence as it stands: but in that respect I may express the doubt whether ship-life, though pervaded by a sort of rough equality, is truly democratic in its real essence.

In *Typhoon* (not *The*) the name is *McWhir* instead of McGrath. The name of the old boy in "The End of the Tether" is *Whalley*.

I am glad it's going to be a real fight.[1] The protest as I've said is really first rate, full of dignity in sentiment and phrasing.

What did Murray write in the *Nation? Good?*

I feel excited at the idea of you preaching a crusade. Do you really mean preaching with the living voice? Where? How? When?

In haste for post. Our dear love to you both.

To John Galsworthy

Someries
6th Jan. of the New Year 1908

DEAREST JACK,

May you be ever happy, (I am writing to Signora Ada separately), may your shadow never grow less and your fame always increase.

As to me, the old story of which no doubt you are sick by this time—Gout. I am not like Mr. Peter Magnus,—I afford no entertainment to my friends. Gout,—since Boxing Day to this time of writing. I never really shook off the fit of it I had 3 weeks before your dinner. And indeed, I've known not a single moment of bodily ease since we got into this new house.

"Et le misérable écrivait toujours." [2]

He is writing now a story the title of which is *Razumov*. Isn't it expressive? I think that I am trying to capture the very soul of things Russian,—*Cosas de Russia*. It is not an easy work but it may be rather good when it's done. It may also be worth a hundred pounds if the good Pinker flies round with it actively enough to become crimson. . . . But there's no heart in my jokes.

Listen to the theme. The Student Razumov (a natural son of a Prince

[1] The agitation about the censorship of plays.
[2] Allusion to a sentence in Flaubert's *Salammbo*.

K.) gives up secretly to the police his fellow student, Haldin, who seeks refuge in his rooms after committing a political crime (supposed to be the murder of de Plehve). First movement in St. Petersburg. (Haldin is hanged of course.) [1]

2d in Genève. The student Razumov meeting abroad the mother and sister of Haldin falls in love with that last, marries her and, after a time, confesses to her the part he played in the arrest of her brother.

The psychological developments leading to Razumov's betrayal of Haldin, to his confession of the fact to his wife and to the death of these people (brought about mainly by the resemblance of their child to the late Haldin), form the real subject of the story.

And perhaps no magazine will touch it. *Blackwood's,* since the Old Man has retired, do not care much to have my work. I think of trying the *Fortnightly.* Ah! my dear, you don't know what an inspiration-killing anxiety it is to think: "Is it salable?" There's nothing more cruel than to be caught between one's impulse, one's act, and that question, which for me simply is a question of life and death. There are moments when the mere fear sweeps my head clean of every thought. It is agonizing,—no less. And,—you know,—that pressure grows from day to day instead of getting less.

But I had to write it. I had to get away from *Chance,* with which I was making no serious progress.

Otherwise things are not well with me. The *Secret Agent* may be pronounced by now an honourable failure. It brought me neither love nor promise of literary success. I own that I am cast down. I suppose I am a fool to have expected anything else. I suppose there is something in me that is unsympathetic to the general public,—because the novels of Hardy, for instance, are generally tragic enough and gloomily written too,—and yet they have sold in their time and are selling to the present day.

Foreignness, I suppose.

All this is matter for anxious thought. Will the long novel serialize? If it does not! I shouldn't wonder if P[inker] were not anxious about that too. He does not hurry me up, but is very expectant. It must be confessed that the work of the last three months makes a miserable show,—as to the quantity. And I have sat and sat days and days. It is an impossible existence. I am a vegetarian now. I eat very little too on purpose. The head is very clear just now, but there are moments when I think against my will that I must give up. It's fatal for an imaginative man,—this ill-omened suggestion coming like that from outside, as it were. I fight it down,—of course,—while I can.

[1] In the margin of this paragraph Joseph Conrad wrote "done", and "to do" in the margin of the next one. It refers to what was to be the novel afterwards entitled *Under Western Eyes.*

I have cast up my account at the beginning of my fiftieth year. Eleven novels. If each had brought £1,000 I would have now £5,000 in hand. For casting up all I owe, the balance against me with P. (£1,572 to date) and the grant I had together, with all I have earned, it works out at £650 per year in round numbers. Even if I have made a mistake of a £100 a year too little, which is improbable (for however carelessly I counted I am not likely to have underestimated all I had by £1,200), this is not outrageously extravagant. And in this, there's Jessie's illness, all of my own,—(the year wasted when writing *Nostromo,* when I had six fits of gout in eleven months)—and this last fatal year with Borys abroad.

And so the year begins.

When are you coming back?

To (Sir) Algernon Methuen

Someries.
26 Jan., 1908.

DEAR MR. METHUEN,

I was laid up with slight gout or I would have answered before.

It's difficult to find a general definition of the stories.[1] They are varied. No monotony is to be feared either in feeling or incident. There is the story of a South American Bandit. "The Strong Man," warlike in its feeling. There is "The Duel, A Military Story"—an attempt to realize the spirit of the Napoleonic Era. These two are long, 4 chaprs. each.

Two Anarchist stories, "The Anarchist" (dealing with an escape from a French penal settlement) and "The Informer" (discovery of a plot—in London) are slightly shorter, 3 & 2 chaprs. respectively. The two shortest: "The Brute: A Piece of Invective" (sea subject) and "Il Conde" (Story of an Adventure in Naples) complete the contents of the volume.

All the stories are stories of incident—action—not of analysis. All are dramatic in a measure but by no means of a gloomy sort. All, but two, draw their significance from the love interest—though of course they are not love stories in the conventional meaning. They are not studies—they touch no problem. They are just stories in which I've tried my best to be *simply entertaining.*

I can't think of anything else I could say about them which could be of practical use to your travellers. For yourself I may mention that in that collection I aimed at a certain *virtuosity* of style for its "Master quality."

I failed in places and in others I've succeeded—I believe.

[1] This refers to the volume *A Set of Six.*

To John Galsworthy

Someries
20 Feb., '08

DEAREST JACK,

Thanks for your letter.

I've had a doctor to see me and am glad to say there is nothing wrong with the veins. It was simply gout in the muscle. I feel a little better—but had a day without a line—no, two days. Which is awful. But I've picked up my work to-day—5 pages, which is not enough.

Let me know how you both are, in your whirl. I stagnate—tho' there has been J. C. Tarver, a friend called Douglas, and young Reynolds [1] to see me, in quick succession. Mary Martindale is coming for the week-end. Ford's last *Fifth Queen* novel is amazing. The whole cycle is a noble conception—the swan song of Historical Romance—and frankly I am glad to have heard it.

The first 2 vols. produced quite a little sensation amongst French *lettrés*. The *Revue des Deux Mondes* [2] had a fine article in December, I think. The *Secret Agent* is going to appear in book form in autumn by the *Mercure de France*. And I have made arrangements to have *everything* translated on the basis of 20% of all profits for me.[3]

And the water flows under the bridges.

I don't think I can come to swell the deputation. At any rate I don't feel I can to-day. But I am better, and perhaps . . .

I hear the postman.

To Norman Douglas

Someries.
29 Febr., 1908.

MY DEAR DOUGLAS,

This is *most excellent* from every point of view.

It is obvious to me that you have a distinguished future before you as a

[1] Stephen Reynolds.

[2] In the issue of the *Revue des Deux Mondes,* December 15, 1907, was published an article by Teodor de Wyzewa entitled, *"Le Roman Anglais en 1907: Les Nouveaux Venus."* That article contains a review of Ford Madox Hueffer's books, *The Fifth Queen* and *Privy Seal;* and also of a *Man of Property* and *The Country House,* by John Galsworthy, whom Mr. de Wyzewa called "a young author, perhaps the cleverest novelist of his country." Probably one of the first allusions to John Galsworthy in the French Press.

[3] That scheme was not worked out: the French translations only of *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* and of *The Secret Agent* were published by the *Mercure*

writer. And also some hard times before you get known. Think seriously of writing a novel. Write your fiction in the *tone* of this very excellent article if you like. Place it in S. Italy if that will help.[1] Try and make it a novel of *analysis* on the basis of some strong situation. A man like you, who has seen things and known many people, has got only to descend within himself for material. And I promise you that everything that I and two or three more can do shall be done to get the novel published with a proper flourish. This is a counsel of wisdom. A novel is the shortest way to a living. Before all, *imitate no one!!*

I send you the article back. Have you another copy?

I send the article back because I want you to see what I have done to it. You'll see it is *just nothing.* It doesn't require anything. I took out a par. or two at the beginning. You'll see yourself that it is purely a question of *literary* tact. The Caraccioli anecdote is very much known and, as it stands, make a dissonance in the first rate beginning of Pagan and Christian miracles. D'you see my idea?

The excellent episode of "the head" I've tinkered a little. *Commemorative* was put in for clearness of reference to what stands above. *Resting on* makes a better image—more startling—*Concealed* (instead of swathed) after "otherwise" requires no justification—it's in the very sense of the phrase. "To my horror, etc., etc." detracted from the effect of *"the country folk,* etc., etc."

The merest trifles, as you see—and only done to show my great regard —my very high opinion of this very charming, picturesque, interesting, sympathetic piece of work.

You will see a word added here and there up to p. 4. On p. 8 I took out one *But* at the beginning of a par. Afterwards nothing. And indeed why should one touch a thing so individual in style and so full of life? It would be presumption. The descriptions touched me deeply. The anecdotic episodes are indeed excellent. I wept—positively tears ran out of my eyes—over the chase of the hen. The whole thing is most harmonious in feeling, in vision, in expression. And harmony is the form of beauty.

I suggest with all deference the addition of a few words at the end.

You may not like a full close—but the ordinary reader expects it. And the ordinary reader also wants the nail hit on the head before his eyes very simply in order that he should *see* the nail. Later on you will realize the inconceivable stupidity of the common reader—the man who forks out the half crown.

de France, till the *Nouvelle Revue Française* started the publication of The Complete Works of Joseph Conrad in French ten years later.

[1] But don't make it a novel of Italian peasant life—not yet! Later on, you may indulge. Place *European* personalities in Italian frame. European here means an international crowd. [J. C.'s note.]

How would it be to end like this:

". . . but it needs neither learning nor acumen to see through yesterday's growth the beauty of the antique form."

Something like that. Or *ancient form*. Think of some phrase in strict relation to the image of the amphora. *To do so* are *not* good words to *end with* a piece of work which hath music in its delicate soul and much vigour in its expression.

One more remark: P. 19. I think you may with advantage take out the words *"disrespect or"* and also replace *disharmony* by *antagonism*—in the same period.

Voilà. Now I want you to send me this piece back.[1] I want to show it about (by post, alas, as I can't move yet) to some people who may be of use to you later on. Can you re-type the first and the second page? It would just make one page, I think. Jessie would have done that for you, but our machine is broken down at last.

No time for civilities.

To (Major) E. Dawson

Someries, Luton.
25th June 1908.

MY DEAR ERNEST,

I am touched and a little appalled at the effort your letter must have cost you in your state of mysterious weakness. Pray don't do it again, but just two words and your initials on a post-card shall be looked for from time to time to report progress.

We are much concerned at your news.

I have been in a state resembling yours, some time after my Congo experience. It was not the convalescence from the fever. The convalescence was over for a year, and I was apparently as well as ever, when that sort of weakness stole over me. I couldn't move *my fingers* (not hand, *fingers*) without sending the pulse up an incredible number of beats. I lay on my back in dismal lodgings and expected to go out like a burnt-out candle any moment. That was nerves, and it was a six-months' job. But you, being looked after, ought to do this variety-turn in three months at the outside.

Jessie's delighted with your charming offering,—and still more with your thought of her. You don't know what a great store that girl sets on your and your brother's friendship. She is awfully crippled. It's heart-breaking for me simply.

[1] This refers to an article which appeared a year later—February, 1909—in the *English Review*.

The "western style" painting looks most fascinating in its proper place,—that is, on the wall above Jessie's writing-table.

Her kindest regards to Miss Gambrill, in which I join. She will be writing to you in a day or two.

Dear old Jack! We are so sorry he's being constantly kept on the rack. I haven't read Noble's book. I know the man, though. No more at present.

This is a bracing place, five hundred feet up. I don't think of the sea now. No one cares about it really, or I would have had as much success here as Loti in France. Borys, after trying twice to leave this world "last year," is fairly well now, and at a little prep. school in Luton. He will be pleased to hear, when he comes home on Saturday, that you remember him,—as a friend.

To John Galsworthy

Someries
Sunday night
[end of July, 1908.]

MY DEAREST JACK,

Let us shake hands on that last chapter.[1] I am sure that your misgivings have no reason to be—yet it is unavoidable and perhaps even right that they should be.

For my part, I am awaiting the promised MS. without misgivings. I only wish I were one hundredth part as certain of my own work.

I am awfully done up and want a change. If we could take a cottage somewhere in Kent for 3 or 4 weeks, it would be nice. At the same time we could look out for something permanent, down that way. Of course that would not mean stopping writing—quite the contrary. It's here that the pen is clogged. I have a positive horror of this place, and wake up each morning with a dread of the day before me.

C—— did not discompose me much. What does it all matter? There is an ass who tells me in *The D[ai]ly News,* on God knows what provocation, that I am a man "without country and language." It is like abusing some poor tongue-tied wretch. For what can one say? The statement is gross and palpable and the answer that could be made would be incomprehensible to nine-tenths of the hearers, who would not have imagination enough to believe that a complex sentiment can be true. I wonder in what language the *Nigger, Youth,* or the *Mirror* could have been written? But the fellow must be an imbecile anyhow since he goes on falling into

[1] Of John Galsworthy's novel *Fraternity.*

raptures over "Gaspar Ruiz" and comparing that wretched magazine fake with the *Lear of the Steppes!!!* It's incredible, isn't it? Idiocy can no farther go! Still a kick from a donkey hurts as much as from a nobler animal and is in a way more humiliating.

I don't know why I am telling you all this. My heart has been like a stone and my hand like lead all day,—and I don't know why I should inflict this mood on you. It's indecent. And yet to hold one's tongue is too difficult, at times. To turn out a volume in 10 months is difficult too,—what do you think? The above *D[ai]ly News* genius exclaims that my novels would have been much better if translated by Mrs. Garnett. That's an idea. Shall I send her the clean type of *Razumov?* But why complicate life to that extent? She ought to write them; and then the harmless reviewer could begin something like this: "Mr. Joseph Conrad's latest novel written by Mrs. Garnett is a real acquisition for our literature, not like the others previously published, which, on the whole, were rather noxious, if amazing, phenomena, etc., etc."

À propos of masterpieces (the article seems rather common nowadays), Edward [Garnett] thinks "The Duel" is one. That means that it is worth just three and six (3/6). For observe: The volume is priced at six shillings (6/–) and I can't really let the five other stories go at less than sixpence (6d) apiece. It wouldn't be business.

Seriously I am glad Edward likes the thing. I had him rather in my eye and would have been cut up if he had failed me there. He puts that first, the "Anarch" second, "Il Conde" third. A consensus of noble minds (Ada's and Edward's) exalts this trifle, to my unspeakable satisfaction. "Gaspar" comes last in the list. As to the "Informer"—*il crache dessus*—he won't have him at any price.

So, writing to you I have written myself into courage to go to bed at last. And now I am really going.

To John Galsworthy

Saturday night
[August, 1908.]

DEAREST JACK,

I won't return the MS. till Monday morning's post.

In H. James's *Little Tour in France* (which I will send to Ada to take West with her for leisurely reading) there occurs a simple sentence which came forcibly to my mind. He has been looking at some picture in a provincial gallery—and he says "All this is painted in a manner to bring tears into one's eyes." I don't quote literally—(the book is downstairs where it is dark and I feel too fagged out doing nothing to move from my chair)—but that's just it! It brings tears into one's eyes liter-

ally by the way it is done. After finishing my reading I sat perfectly still, I don't know for how long, as a pilgrim may sit after a long and breathless ascent, on a commanding summit in view of the promised land.

There is, in such a prospect, after the sustained excitement of the road, the reaction of serene wonder and the gift of much meditation. Various thoughts passed through my head. And they were many, too. But they were not disturbing; for I was thinking in the mood of quiet assurance, of blessed certitude where your art had irresistibly placed me. My heartbeats were indeed quickened, but my heart was at peace with itself. There was no discord in my thoughts, tho' some I admit had a questioning accent. I won't trouble you with them all. I did ask myself several things, one of them whether we have not here a writer in direct descent of the great tradition of the English art of novel-writing—I mean the highest tradition.

As I have asked myself that question in perfect sincerity, you will understand easily that this one resuming in its magnitude the whole interplay of mental impulses and hesitations in the face of emotional surrender must remain unanswered. Sufficient that it came, not as a mere jingle of words, but as a dignified and austere witness to the power of your pages—that your work so much of its time in its inception, conception and treatment seems to carry a great national art one step forward on the historical road of self-expression.

After saying that much I must leave you. All discussion would seem idle. There it is! looking very, very big indeed—and all the pages and pages I would write about it wouldn't, in comparison, be worth more than a book of cigarette papers.

Moreover I haven't slept for 3 nights and have eaten nothing to speak of for the last two days and have written not a page for a week. And it is late too. So I will go to bed and be there staring at nothing—a greatly refreshing occupation.

All the same I would like a half-hour talk (but not with the pen) with you about your wonderful *Shadows*.[1] Not that the book requires it —but still . . .

To Arthur Symons

Someries
Monday. [Aug., 1908.]

MY DEAR SIR,

Thanks for communicating to me your study of my work—this "rejected address" to the public on behalf of my art. I can be nothing but grateful for the warm, living sincerity of your impression and of your

[1] *Fraternity*, originally called *The Shadows*.

analysis. You may imagine with what curiosity I went on from page to page.

You say things which touch me deeply. Reading certain passages I feel that 14 years of honest work are not gone for nothing. A big slice of life that, which thanks to you I may say, is not altogether lost. There has been in all that time not 10 minutes of amateurishness. That is the truth. For the rest I may say that there are certain passages which have surprised me. I did not know that I had "a heart of darkness" and an "unlawful" soul. Mr. Kurz had, and I have not treated him with the easy nonchalance of an amateur. Believe me, no man paid more for his lines than I have. By that I possess an inalienable right to the use of all my epithets. I did not know that I delighted in cruelty and that the shedding of blood was my obsession.

The fact is that I am really a much simpler person. Death is a fact, and violent death is a fact too. In the simplicity of my heart, I tried to realize these facts when they came in. Do you really think that old Flaubert gloated over the deathbed of Emma, or the death march of Matho, or the last moments of Félicie?[1] And for the other things you say, things splendid and laudatory, particularizing and generalizing your generous appreciation, I will simply say, I don't know. I've never asked myself, or looked into myself or thought of myself. There was no time in these years to turn my head away from the table. There are whole days when I did not know whether the sun shone or not. And, after all, the books are there! Also a sense of disillusioned weariness. You may be sure that the Editor who rejected your article has never known such faithful service nor yet what it costs one. But the writing of novels, as a charming lady who disturbed me cruelly on a certain afternoon said, "is such a delightful occupation."[2]

Delightful or not, I have always approached my task in the spirit of love for mankind. And I've rather taken it seriously, an attitude I should say impossible for the Editor of a serious Review, perhaps of an august Quarterly.

It seems almost indecent to thank you. But I stand outside and feel grateful to you for the recognition of the work, not the man. Once the last page is written the man does not count. He is nowhere.

F. Cooper is a rare artist. He has been one of my masters. He is my constant companion. That dismal "bajazzo" with his debased jargon of niggers and "mean" whites smirches whatever he touches. He's a "mean white" himself, about the meanest that ever stole the gift of words from a nodding god.

Là-dessus une poignée de main bien attendrie.

[1] He means Felicité in Flaubert's *"Un Cœur Simple."*

[2] See *A Personal Record,* end of Chap. V.

To Mrs. Galsworthy

Someries, Luton, Beds.
18th Aug., 1908.

DEAREST ADA,

I am so glad you had a good, several good, words for the "Conde." [1] Truth is I am rather proud of that little trick. It took me ten days, you know; and it is the very last thing I wrote with something approaching an easy mind—comparatively speaking, I did it immediately after finishing the shorter (serialized) version of the *Sec. Agt.*

No. I am not very well: and the worst of it is that it's getting visible. Yesterday Borys walked in about noon and sat down in my room with his cap in his hand, as an old friend might have done. Then suddenly, "Come along, dad, I'll take you round the fields." As I was sitting before a blank page I got up meekly to follow him and heard more about farming in an hour and half than I ever heard in my life—good, positive, dead certain information. There's nothing of a dilettante or hobbyist about him. All work is interesting to him as *work:* and his capacity to take things in, without any special show of "going for them," strolling about as it were, is perfectly amazing. And all the time perfectly consistent, never bored, never idle, always himself. But enough of him.

I am glad you like James's little tour.[2] I am keeping the *Jeanne d'Arc* [3] till you return to town, unless you want me to send it out to you. Upon the whole I think it is disappointing. One asks oneself why on earth A. F. wanted to touch that subject at all, and if he had to touch it why in that way precisely? You may well believe that *the* novel [4] is never for a day out of my thoughts.

Our dear love to you both.

To Edward Garnett

21 August, morning
1908

DEAREST EDWARD,

I write instantly to tell you of the great, great pleasure your note brought to me to begin the day with.

Your classification of the tales [5] is eminently satisfactory to me. I feel

[1] "Il Conde," one of the tales of *A Set of Six.* It had been published in *Cassell's Magazine,* August, 1908.
[2] Henry James's *A Little Tour in France.*
[3] Anatole France's *Jeanne d'Arc.*
[4] *Fraternity,* by John Galsworthy.
[5] *A Set of Six.*

it is perfectly right. I am delighted to see you put the "Conde" *3d;* and as to the "Informer" (for which I have been complimented and lauded from the U. S. and from France), I put it in to make up the vol. to requisite thickness—not from a desire to please all the world and his wife. I could not call the vol. the *Duel* because R. Marsh, novelist, had already protested against the title (when appearing serially in *Pall Mall Mag.*) as having been already used by him. Finally I concluded to arrange the tales chronologically and thus "Gaspar Ruiz" had to come first—dating from Jan., 1905. As at that time I was also writing the middle papers of the *Mirror of the Sea,* you will admit that the child of your literary adoption has some versatility. Eh?

W. L. Courtney in a long article calls the "Duel" tedious and "Gaspar Ruiz" a masterpiece; and myself a heartless wretch with a pose of brutality like the rest of the moderns. Still, always according to W. L. C., there are two masterpieces and a half in the vol.—"G. Ruiz" being one of them, "An Anarch[ist]" the other and the "Brute" the doubtful one.

Your acceptance of the "Duel" is balm to my soul. My first intention was to call that story "The Masters of Europe" but I rejected it as pretentious. Anyway I did conscientiously try to put in as much of Napoleonic feeling as the subject could hold. This has been missed by all the reviewers, every single one being made blind by the mere tale. I confess to you that I rested my trust on your judgment and would have been horribly cut up if you had condemned the story. It has been waved away by more than one editor, I believe—and the *Pall Mall Magazine* (which favours me generally, as witness "Typhoon," "G. Ruiz") accepted it with some hesitation, I am told. A complimentary phrase to the address of the *P. M. M.* would be a reward of moral courage and some insight.

Yes, dear, I'll like and respect all you have to say. The *Times* review seemed to me insignificant. But there is a fellow in the *D[ai]ly News* who calls me—God only knows on what provocation—"a man without country and language." It is like abusing a tongue-tied man, for what can one say? The statement is simple and brutal; and my answer would involve too many feelings of one's inner life, stir too much secret bitterness and complex loyalty to be even attempted with any hope of being understood. I thought that a man who has written the *Nigger,* "Typhoon," "The End of the Tether," "Youth," was safe from that sort of thing. But apparently not. If I had made money by dealing in diamond shares like my neighbour here, Sir Julius Wernher, of Hamburg, I would be a baronet of the U. K. and provided both with a language and a country. Still I suppose the man is simply an ass; and even the tribute he pays to your wife's unforgettable achievement fails to mollify me, for this once. For he goes on shoving me with incredible folly on to

Turgeniev *à propos* of "G. Ruiz," comparing it with *Lear of the Steppes:* do you understand? The Lear!!! that infernal magazine fake with the *Lear of the Steppes!!!!* It is enough to make one wonder whether the man understands the words he writes—whether he has sense and judgment enough to come in when it rains? Has ever the Shade of a great artist been more amazingly, more gratuitously insulted? Who's that fellow? Couldn't someone speak to him quietly and suggest he should go behind a counter and weigh out margarine by the sixpennyworth? I can understand Anderson Graham, to whom I am such an offensive fraud that he can't even see me scratch the side of my nose without exasperation at the indecency of the thing. That's a genuine temperamental expression, frank and honourable enough in its way, tho' certainly a little funny. He jumps on me with both feet in the *Country Life* "Book of the Week." [1] But the *D[ai]ly News* article is beyond everything the gloomiest pessimism as to the good feeling and common decency of daily criticism could imagine.

Thanks once more for your dear little note and for the forthcoming review. Remember me to your wife and David when you write. Love from us all.

P. S. No. The house was unsuitable. We are trying for something Ashford way, towards Aldington and Smeeth.

To John Galsworthy

[1908]
Wednesday.

DEAREST JACK,

From one point of view I've nothing but admiration for the ending of *Shadows*.[2] Its naturalness is appalling. Of course it can be attacked, but its quality comes out in the fact that the objections fade away as soon as one tries to formulate them to oneself. I will not touch on the æsthetic value of these last pages. That cannot be questioned. The beauty of certain passages glows and sighs at one. The question, if one could stand up before the sheer merit of expression, would be rooted deep under the fair surface. Having said that much I could go on writing several pages of pretty-pretty talk to you and it would not be insincere either. But life is too short for that,—not yours, but mine, I mean to say. And there is

[1] See *A Personal Record,* 2nd par. of Chap. VI.

[2] *Shadows* was published under the title of *Fraternity* in 1909. The ending was modified but not in relation to Hilary.

another consideration as well. It would not be worthy of you—and, well, of me too.

The social background of the story is too big for the personages in front and perhaps a little too remote. If the story had been the story of the loves of Martin and Thyme, it would have been impossible to make those objections, or at any rate very difficult to make them. As it is, the background is connected with the action, not by the developments of the action itself, but more or less by analysis. That, I think, is a defect. But that observation, I am ready to admit, may spring not from the truth of things but from some defect of my understanding which causes me to be blind to subtler connections existing both in your mind and in your work. I may have missed many delicate indications. A book like this demands many auditions. It is anything but simple. Its suggestions are multiple (in which by the bye it does not resemble the work of Turgeniev, whom the idle paragraphist proclaims your chosen master) and run in and out of each other.

Yes! It is a complicated book. It is possible to view it in innumerable ways for it excites imagination at every step. But before all it is the book of a moralist.

For that is, my dear Jack, what you are—a humanitarian moralist. You are revealing yourself as a moralist in all the greatness of your talent.

This fact which you cannot help and which may lead you yet to become the Idol of the Public—if I may so express myself—arises as the greatest danger in the way of your art. It may prevent the concentration of effort in one single direction—because your art will always be trying to assert itself against the impulse of your moral feelings. This may lead to a certain uncertainty of intention which may conceivably lead further to a vain harrowing of your feelings—tho' I don't believe that it will ever lead you into the gratuitous atrocity, of, say, *Ivan Illyith* or the monstrous stupidity of such a thing as the *Kreutzer Sonata,* for instance; where an obvious degenerate not worth looking at twice, totally unfitted not only for married life but for any sort of life, is presented as a sympathetic victim of some sort of sacred truth that is supposed to live within him.

No, I am not afraid of that aberration for you. It is unthinkable.

Then—you may ask me—why talk about it at all?

Well, I have a subtlety of my own—and you may well believe that it is not for the fun of displaying it that I am writing these pages. A moralist must present us with a gospel—he must give counsel, not to our reason or sentiment, but to our very soul. Do you feel in yourself the stature for that task? That you must meditate over with great seriousness—because, my dear Jack, because it is in you to be a great novelist.

It is impossible to read a book like that without asking oneself,—what then? Are we to be sanitists or write checks, or are we to let casual girls embrace our knees till our, what shall I call it?—refined desire is completely satisfied, our humanity at the same time not being. imperative enough and not elementary enough, I may say, to knock her mercifully on her head afterwards? Or is this,—I won't say tale,—is this vision of life and things, so admirably imagined, so felicitously and poetically presented, is it a mere declaration, not of the vanity of things (that would be a too optimistic view), but of the utter futility of existence? Pessimism can no further go.

This is the danger of the moralist who has not a faith, however crude, distorted or extravagant, to present to his audience.

And don't think that I am an exceptional reader. There will be thousands who will feel a sort of uneasiness. It will to them dwarf the greatness of the book. I am talking of simple people. The other kind will no doubt discover varied interpretations, not one of which will be worth having.

All the incertitude and all the danger arise from the predominance of Hilary. For the view can be taken that the book is a study of temperament. What is Hilary? He cannot be a type. He is a man of forty. A man of forty unless he is a pathological case must have a formed character, that sort of knowledge of his own weakness which (the knowledge, I mean) is a sort of strength, and also some sense of moral independence and perhaps—surely it is not too much to ask—a certain power of resistance. But H. has no individuality as above defined, he is refined into a special monster. I don't think, my dearest Jack, that in the glow of inspired composition (I am speaking with the utmost seriousness, I am under the charm of it) you have realized the harrowing atrocity of his conduct. You have refined and spiritualized that poor wretch into a remote resemblance to those lunatics—there are such—who try to cut off locks of women's hair in crowds. He is a degenerate who is completely satisfied with the last scene with the girl and therefore with incredible villainy and a total absence of moral sense will act as you make him act. The strain on the reader is tremendous and the whole thing borders on the intolerable. The talk of the men drinking coffee in the club, their supposed advice to him, is a positive relief,—a whiff of fresh air by comparison.[1]

What I say above is the only explanation that can stand in good psychology and the nature of men. Morbid psychology, be it always understood, is a perfectly legitimate subject for an artist's genius. But not for a moralist. You, my dear Jack, seeing the evil, the great and insensate evil of the class convention bred through generations into the bone of

[1] Refers to an end which was rewritten.

society, ask us to believe that the mainspring, the motive of that most base abandonment (all that is *masterly* in execution) is the feeling of class—and therein you,—as happens to moralists,—betray the very truth of things. For considering the atrocious character of his conduct, the motive is incredible. It is *not* the motive, whatever your art may make us believe at first. If it had that strength to annihilate the man's pity and conscience, it would have been so great, so immense in its power as to have stopped him long before,—*effectually* stopped him,—which it had not done. Ergo: it was not strong enough then. In commonest humanity it cannot be strong enough at the end. One would behave with more compassion to an insect. Therefore it is some *other* motive,—or the desire is weakened, non-existent because of the last scene. A pathological case of spiritual sensualism.

I felt bound to say all that. The night passes over my head, but my mental absorption in your work abides with me. One more point I must touch, for we are craftsmen as well as seers, labouring in the flesh as well as in the spirit.

The end by the disposition of episodes resembles too much the termination of Hilary's biography, as it were. And that dwarfs it somehow in its intention—reduces it too much to the point of view of the study of a temperament. To mask that aspect which, in my soul and conscience, I believe hurtful to the effect of the book, I venture to lay before you a suggestion and beg you to consider it impartially.

It amounts to nothing more radical than a transposition.[1] My idea is like this. After the last scene of Hilary with the girl, stop short and put in the whole block of Hughes's return home to break the continuity of the "all Hilary" feeling. Then pick up Hilary again (perhaps even so far as the point where he returns home and talks with his wife?) and so on, ending with the word *Brother* as it stands now. I don't know if I express myself clearly. The night is over (I am a slow writer) and I feel tired, but you will have seized my idea,—for what it is worth.

It was like having seen you two in a dream, a fugitive, evanescent impression of Ada and Jack looking extremely well and animated. A good impression: but we could have done with something more. Did you get wet at all or a little or very much? It was a most inconsiderate thunderstorm.

Drop me a line before you leave London. Our dear love.

P. S. (morning). I've slept four hours and have been walking one hour, thinking and interrogating myself. My feeling is the same. I won't read over what I have written. I am perfectly satisfied as to my honesty and I do not wish to look at the confused expression of that honesty.

[1] This suggestion was not adopted by John Galsworthy.

Moreover, one may be honest and foolish. But folly, if it only be really honest, is bound to contain a grain of wisdom. And you cannot be angry with me if I am concerned with something that is in you, something greater than the book itself. It is also possible that I am blind, deaf and lame, that I can neither see you clearly, nor hear you distinctly, nor follow you closely. And if so, nothing that I say or leave unsaid matters in the least.

Note: There is the difficulty of the girl saying she *had seen* Hughes. But the end will be attained (to explain her coming) if she says that Hughes has come out of prison. Anyway that can be managed somehow.

To John Galsworthy

Friday, [1908.]

DEAREST JACK,

Here I am once more. I have laid aside my MS. (a beggarly six pages) for a last word, which in effect is no other than the preceding words.

I don't know what you have made of my 16 pp. sent off yesterday [1] with the type-script of *Shadows*. One thing must have been obvious to you and that is that I have been deeply moved by the book. If I could believe that there is a work in me which could move you as deeply, I would be less at variance with life.

It all can be reduced to saying that for me Hilary is not a sufficiently big and human figure to stand in the forefront of the great Question, the enormous interrogation point which for me symbolizes the book. You have robbed him not only of his flesh (by a careful analysis) but also of his bones. With all the space he occupies, he is conceived, or carried out, in a minor key throughout. He is almost angelic—and if the downfall of an angel, happening accidentally upon the affairs of this earth, is a foregone conclusion, it is not a sight to move men either to repentance or to reflection. That a pure spirit (pure: that is inhuman) thrown amongst impure conditions will end in some base betrayal of himself may be taken as pretty certain—but it is not this thesis you wanted to illustrate. The man you set up is an incapable—impotent. Of the two incapables that come to one's mind, the loquacious and the nervous, Rudin and Nejdanov, that cannot be said in the absolute sense. They were both necessary—to their society and even to the State, at any rate to the community. They had at least some intention. But in Hilary there is nothing to be discovered. One asks oneself what that unfortunate creature was afraid of losing. He is shown as having nothing in his possession. I don't

[1] The previous letter.

speak here of the "captaincy of his soul"—(which is a high falutin way of suggesting a bagman's aspiration), but he has no hold on anything in the world. This, under the tenderness of your presentation, notwithstanding the art you lavish upon him (and because no doubt of your most amazing insight) becomes apparent very soon. It is complete decadence, exposed as never before perhaps. But that is not your object, neither as moralist nor as novelist—is it? It's another evil you are aiming at—or I have missed the theme of the book, which I don't think I have done.

All the way along you show him as absolutely betraying his class in the whole course of his inner life, of his intimate relations,—in thoughts, in half speeches, in his silences. Why? For what object? (except as a secret gratification) is not disclosed to us. He is so. There is nothing positive about him. He is perfectly faithless. He is so from the beginning. He ends by betraying, by an unparalleled atrocity of his impotence, not the girl herself, but the hope, the supreme hope, he himself had put into her heart. This is perfectly devilish (and the devil is a sort of "pure" spirit too—only I understand he has some pride which makes him fit in a way to walk this imperfect earth) and, I take it, an ultimate instance of the evil of class—the moral evil of the class feeling. But by that time we can no longer believe in the instance. We feel—or I feel—that class is just the mask of impotence, and your attack misses its mark.

No, my dear Jack. A pure spirit such as your wonderful Hilary (he is *wonderful*) ends always by sitting down in the mud—for indeed what does it matter to a pure spirit where he sits?—and he will sit snivelling too, in nine cases out of ten, because pure spirits have no use for simple human dignity, which is made up of good and evil faced openly, grasped with full knowledge.

But then, don't you see, what happens to Hilary does not matter. And *that* not only in this book, but looking into the future seems to me to be the danger lying in wait for your art. If the thesis of the book is as I understand it, you should have presented to us a man really belonging to the class and with a noble instinct trying to assert his manhood against the heart-withering, brain-muddling convention—and then—had you so willed—knocked him down. For obviously the time for the Bible in the bedrooms of small country inns to be replaced by Mr. Stone's Great Book has not come yet.

But enough. At last enough.

I have been telling you things, dearest Jack, which you won't hear from anyone, either from critics or from *littérateurs*. This is talk between you and me, brother. Not that I suppose for a moment you care if I shouted it from house-tops, but because words can pass between you and me which are not for everybody's hearing. Beware of *Sheltonism,* you understand me? I love Shelton with an exceeding love—but beware

of him—I mean of that side of him which is purely and exclusively Sheltonian. No—don't abandon Shelton: he's your creation, your embodied conscience, your wistful spirit going about on the earth. Hold him. Stick to him—but don't let him write your novels. And if that would be like excising some part of your very being—well, you will suffer no doubt—but you can't pay too high a price for the greatness of inspiration, for that voice which is in you. Our dear love to you both.

P. S. Just heard from Mrs. Patrick Campbell. Can't find actor to play Harry [1] therefore can't perform play.

To Edward Garnett

28. Aug., '08.

DEAREST EDWARD,

I have the *Nation* and I must thank you for the article.[2] No doubt to put one's tongue into both cheeks at once is an immoral trick and I suspect that it is on the ground that you and W. L. Courtney (bow) meet in the condemnation of the "Informer."

I don't defend him—it. But let me ask, is my earnestness of no account? Is that a Slavonic trait? And I am earnest, terribly earnest. Carlyle bending over the history of Frederick called the Great was a mere trifle, a volatile butterfly, in comparison. For that good man had only to translate himself out of bad German into the English we know, whereas I had to work like a coal miner in his pit quarrying all my English sentences out of a black night.

For that reason, I suppose, I read in a study (still unpublished) of Conrad, that I gloat over scenes of cruelty and am obsessed by visions of spilt blood.[3]

At any rate I think I have always written with dignity, with more dignity than the above-alluded-to butterfly ever could command. And that not certainly from lack of conviction, which often takes that outward form. The fact is that I have approached things human in a spirit of piety foreign to those lovers of humanity who would like to make of life a sort of Cook's Personally Conducted Tour—from the cradle to the grave. I have never debased that quasi-religious sentiment by tears and groans and sighs. I have neither grinned nor gnashed my teeth. In a word, I have behaved myself decently—which, except in the gross conventional sense, is not so easy as it looks. Therefore there are those who

[1] Harry Hagberd in "One Day More."

[2] Review of *A Set of Six,* in the *Nation,* August.

[3] An article by Arthur Symons. See the letter to Arthur Symons, August, 1908, on pp. 72–73.

reproach me with the pose of brutality, with the lack of all heart, delicacy, sympathy—sentiment—idealism. There is even one abandoned creature who says I am a neo-platonist. What on earth is that?

However, as long as *you* are there, my memory will be safe. That's what I thought while reading your review. The quotation is most skilfully selected since it is effective *per se,* not depending on the remote context and giving a good, almost too good, idea of the story.

We are going for a week or so to Aldington—rooms in a farmhouse not very far from the Hueffers. I shall probably take a long spell of heavy pulling at the novel [1] without a name. I have it all in my hand and yet when it comes to writing I simply can't find the words. I have been like that before, 10 years ago, but now it is a more serious portent. I am just a bit scared—but don't mention it to anybody. I wish I could believe in an intelligent, benevolent Supreme Being to whom I could leave the task of paying my debts—such debts as the one I owe you for instance. And perhaps there is one. I don't know, but it is clear that unless there be a God to repay you in some heavenly coin I shall die in your debt. Love from us all.

To Arthur Symons

29 Aug., 1908.

DEAR MR. SYMONS,

I doubt whether I have expressed sufficiently that sort of special pleasure the recognition of my work by a man like you was certain to give me. That feeling partaking of shyness and delight is difficult to express. And the characteristic generosity of the recognition has almost frightened me. Meditating the trouble you have taken over my pages I feel remorseful also—as though I had cheated you—not your intelligence; that would be impossible, but your benevolence and perhaps your hopes a little—just a little. A reader like you puts so much of his own high quality into a work he is reading, directly the writer has been lucky enough to awaken his sympathy! I am afraid that you have given without counting, and yet I would be glad to believe that I deserve this profusion; for indeed what you give is eminently worth holding.

One thing that I am certain of is that I have approached the object of my task, things human, in a spirit of piety. The earth is a temple where there is going on a mystery play, childish and poignant, ridiculous and awful enough, in all conscience. Once in I've tried to behave decently. I have not degraded any quasi-religious sentiment by tears and groans; and if I have been amused or indignant, I've neither grinned nor gnashed

[1] *Under Western Eyes.*

my teeth. In other words, I've tried to write with dignity, not out of regard for myself, but for the sake of the spectacle, the play with an obscure beginning and an unfathomable *dénouement*.

I don't think that this has been noticed. It is your penitent beating the floor with his forehead and the ecstatic worshipper at the rails that are obvious to the public eye. The man standing quietly in the shadow of the pillar, if noticed at all, runs the risk of being suspected of sinister designs. Thus I've been called a heartless wretch, a man without ideals and a *poseur* of brutality. But I will confess to you under seal of secrecy that *I don't believe* I am such as I appear to mediocre minds.

But enough. You have, unexpected, like a burglar, forced the lock of the safe where I keep my stock of megalomania, so I don't apologize for these worthless outpourings. It's your fault clearly, but you shall be no longer punished. As I wrote to a friend lately, I have been quarrying my English out of a black night, working like a coal miner in his pit. For fourteen years now I have been living as if in a cave without echoes.— If you come shouting gloriously at the mouth of the same you can't really expect from me to pretend I am not there.

I am profoundly touched by your letter, but that I am sure you understand already.

P. S. We are going off to-day to stay near Ford Madox Hueffer in Aldington, nr. Hythe, Kent—Hogben House. Should you hear anything of the play a letter will find me there for the next fortnight. I will be struggling desperately with a novel now already overdue.

To Stephen Reynolds

[Undated. 1908.]

There are books one seems to have read before, and books that one doesn't want to read, books that one reads with annoyance, pleasure, exasperation and wonder; but this, your *Poor Man's House*,[1] is a book for which one seems to have waited all the time, without knowing it exactly; not a revelation, but the satisfaction of an intimate need of which one becomes aware after it has been satisfied at last. I am not a critic, as you know, nor a man to utter pretty, beautiful, or deep things about a book. I keep no store of pregnant phrases. The usual civilities I could write to a young author, I dare say, if I tried very hard; but since

[1] This letter has already been printed in Mr. Harold Wright's Introduction to the letters of Stephen Reynolds (published by Leonard and Virginia Woolf at the Hogarth Press, Paradise Road, Richmond, 1923). It was very probably written in 1908, the year when *A Poor Man's House* appeared.

I don't mean to insult you, this is not to be thought of. I will tell you instead what has happened. I walked into my room, came up to the table you know, took up your book and opened it at the first page of the text (not the preface). When I came to myself with a queer sense of unutterable fatigue I was still standing, and I had reached page 62—not glancing through, mind you, but giving each phrase, each word, each image its full value as I went. Compact, harmonious, without a single—I won't say false—but uncertain note, true in aim, sentiment and expression, precise and imaginative, never precious, but containing here and there an absolutely priceless phrase—that is what I think of your piece of prose. It is, no doubt, also a good action because the aim is worthy and the sentiment is human—if a little didactic. Searching my heart with some care, I feel convinced that any difference there may be between us must be merely verbal. If I didn't think you true, I would want you to be.

If I were sufficiently saintly or patriarchal enough, I would give my solemn blessing to those pages, where your great talent first speaks to the world in a case altogether just and in an admirable manner. But I am neither a saint nor a patriarch—I am not even a good man. And a blessing is a serious thing. Unless the hand is worthy, evil may ensue. So I hold my hand, but I rejoice with you in the accomplished beginning. The thing now is to keep thy torch burning bright—and to hold it high.

To John Galsworthy

Sunday, [1908.]

DEAREST JACK,

I sit rebuked with your letter before me. It is the fate of all men who count to be misunderstood, and of writers most of all. But it is not an ignoble fate and you do well not to be angry. I can't take back anything I have said: and I would not do it if I could. Let it all stand between you and me as a visible sign of my almost fierce affection for your work, —that highest expression of your personality,—of my jealous concern, and therefore unreasonable concern, for its fate amongst the minds of men. I should not like it to be touched by the most remote shadow of doubt and thus I do see danger where probably the danger does not exist. It's clear I haven't read the book sufficiently,—I felt this as I wrote, and a written word has a certain brutality which is softened in the living speech between man and man. I wish we had talked!

No, dearest Jack, Hilary is *never* bad,—neither first nor last. Hilary is simply wonderful whichever way one looks at him. He is not bad. He is good, I repeat, in a wonderful manner altogether unique and your very own. What perhaps could make him better would be some slight

inconsistency of speech or action,—a few lines,—just for once: or rather what would make him altogether admirable as an artistic achievement would be some slight inconsistency in your *conception* of him,—a thing that would not (that need not) be expressed at all but somehow *felt*. You know that sort of inconsistency that one is aware of in Bazarov, in the inflexible Bazarov,[1] say, somewhere, a hint of "firmness."

I am afraid I am growing stupid, but I trust in your long familiarity with the falterings of my mind. You will guess what I would say. That thing I am wishing for in my dumb way would give him more *"relief,"* —in the plastic sense.

And since you take what I say in good part I will take the liberty (it *is* a liberty) to call your attention once more to my suggestion about the arrangement of the end. Hilary gets in front of the larger tragedy,—of the great suggestive background. By bringing forward the other ruined man, the unlucky biographical effect is destroyed at once. The end becomes more spacious, I mean more visibly so. Have you time and inclination for the experiment? I think it would be worth making from an artistic point of view. The *absolute* value of the book, nothing that you can do or leave undone can now affect. It is there,—quite triumphant,—profoundly moving. I prophesy an impressive success.

P. S. Thursday—I have read and re-read every word, giving due weight to every shade of your meaning, and I still think that the idealizing for moral purposes of a man capable of such a spiritual crime is too Tolstoyan to be approved by a plain man without tears and sensibility like myself.

To Norman Douglas

Someries.
29th Sept., 1908.

DEAR DOUGLAS,

Just a word to say that your "Isle of Typhœus" is accepted by the Editor of the *English Review*. The life of that publication will begin on the 25 Nov. with its December No. Your paper will appear in the third issue—that is in February, 1909. It was impossible to arrange it better, as in the first issue W. H. Hudson writes on "Stonehenge"—in the 2nd issue Cunninghame Graham on "Andorra"—and you in the 3rd on the "Isle of Typhœus."

Hueffer, the Editor (and my *intime*), asks you most heartily to call

[1] Bazarov in Turgeniev's *Fathers and Children*.

on him in a friendly way at 84 Holland Park Avenue as soon as ever you arrive in London. They have enough capital to go on for 4 issues. Then if the thing shapes well, it will be continued—and may become a permanent outlet for your work. If the public does not respond to the new monthly magazine devoted to Art, Letters and Ideas—the publication will end with the 4th issue.

When are you coming over?—Send me the *Sorrento* book and I shall see to it that E. V. Lucas has it without delay.

P. S. Please advise me whether perchance the "Isle" is placed somewhere else? Jess is far from well. She sends her kindest regards. I am really done up, but keep on going still.

To J. B. Pinker

Oct., 1908.

DEAR PINKER,

Thanks for the quick dispatch you have given to my request for more paper. I am anxious to have all *Razv* [1] up to date typed clear and out of the house. I corrected as Miss Hallowes [2] typed, thus making it absolutely ready for pub: in serial form. You will receive the two copies very soon—as they are much better in your care than here.

I am anxious in other ways as to the *Remces*.[3] To make Polish life enter English literature is no small ambition—to begin with. But I think it can be done. To reveal a very particular state of society, bring forward individuals with very special traditions and touch in a personal way upon such events, for instance, as the liberation of the serfs (which in the number of people affected and in the general humanitarian significance is a greater fact of universal interest than the abolition of Negro Slavery) is a big enterprise. And yet it presents itself easily just because of the intimate nature of the task, and of the 2 vols. of my uncle's *Memoirs* which I have by me, to refresh my recollections and settle my ideas.[4] I can safely say that I feel equal to the work.

A mere casual suggestion has grown into a very absorbing plan. Everyone thinks well of it, the latest favourable opinion coming to me in your letter received this morning. My literary reputation, which seems more clearly defined with every published vol. (I am struck by the general tone of the reviews of the *Set* [5]), has already enough substance to weigh

[1] *Razumov,* provisional title for *Under Western Eyes.*
[2] Joseph Conrad's secretary from then till 1924.
[3] *Some Reminiscences.*
[4] Thaddeus Bobrowski's *Memoirs.*
[5] *A Set of Six.*

favourably in the scale for the success of a *personal* book. This seems the psychological moment—and the appearance of a new *Review* is a good determining factor. My friendship for the editor (which is known) is a sufficient motive.[1] It is a generally lucky concourse of circumstances. It may be, so to speak, *the* chance of a lifetime—coming neither too soon nor yet too late; for my acceptance as an English writer is an accomplished fact—and the writer himself is not "used up," either in regard to his own mind or in the public estimation of his work.

This is my feeling at the present juncture. I think that in England a certain amount of attention is assured for the serial appearance. In regard to the U. S., I note what you say with some concern. I don't want these forthcoming pages, bound, as they are, to be unique in their character, to be thrown away. I regret your remark that "the time is short." It is really no one's fault. But I ask myself whether it would be not worth while to secure the technical pub^{on}. to save copyright in U. S.? Is that practicable? The first inst[alment] being protected, you would have more time for the necessary negotiations bearing upon the appearance of the whole. What do you think of the suggestion? *Please let me know.*

The part of this letter bearing on the plan, scope, and intention of the *Recs.* is open for your use in the negotiations you may enter into with editors and pub^{ers}. in U. S. You may say also that in the course of development the inner story of most of my books will come out—a sort of literary confession as to the sources as well as to the aims. I have been even thinking of a title something like: *The Art and the Life,* or *The Pages and the Years,* reminiscences. As to England nothing presses for book form. In regard to type-script here, there is the *En[glish] Rev[iew]*: for the first 4 inst[alments]. If the *Rev:* should fail, no doubt another place will be found to continue in. In this connection as you ask me what the length of the next inst[alment] will be, I may say that for myself (and Ford approves) I contemplate an av^{ge} length of 4,000. The first inst. is nearly 8—but it was advantageous to make the beginning full—and anyhow I wanted to give good measure. In Nov. it may be divided into 2 portions if they like. But it would be a pity, as it has been planned as a whole.

Lastly I can tell you that with that subject I am confident to meet your requirements whatever they may be (in reason) as to length and speed of production. It must all be dictated and then revised. *No other* method will do. But with that, comparative speed is possible. On the other hand, I must not devote myself exclusively to it, either at once or even when

[1] It refers to the *English Review* under Ford Madox Hueffer's editorship.

Raz[umov] is finished. *Chance* must be taken up and pushed on (as before contemplated) in my usual manner of production. In such conditions I think I can guarantee (*if needed*) 1,500 to 2,000 words of *Remin*^{cs}. per week—that is if some really important advantage for us both should depend on it.

To E. V. Lucas

Someries, Luton.
6 Oct., 1908.

MY VERY DEAR LUCAS,

I have tasted, sipped and consumed the delectable nectar prepared surely with the milk of human kindness and spiced wine of your wit. And if at bottom one may discern some honest bitterness it is surely right since we are no Olympians but mere mortals, for whom that gentle feast has been prepared.

This is delightful; and what's even more delightful is this, that one feels that what you have said you have said excellently well but you have not said all you have to say. There will be more from you for our profit and pleasure. I put the nature of my anticipation in that way because you —at least—will understand me when I say that there is nothing more profitable in the world for a man's soul than certain pleasures. A good book is a good action. It has more than the force of good example. And if the moralist will say that it has less merit—let him. Indeed we are not writing for the salvation of our own souls. "A man should not be tame" says the Spanish proverb, and I would say: An author is not a monk. Yet a man who puts forth the secret of his imagination to the world accomplishes, as it were, a religious rite. In all the pages that come from your pen I discover, my dear Lucas, that spirit of piety towards things human, to which I myself (even so) dare to lay claim (because certain of my intention) in the first instalment of some fragmentary reminiscences that are to appear in the *English Review*. But at the sight of your lines the phrase, already used, slips under the pen as a tribute to an evident truth.

I am worried rather more than usual on account of my poor wife's knee, which is developing alarming symptoms. She asks me to send her love to Mrs. Lucas (who, I hope, remembers Conrad—he of the hansoms)—and her greetings to you. And from us both love to Audrey, the undying flame of our first-born.

To Norman Douglas

Friday [1908].

MY DEAR DOUGLAS,

One has got to be careful what one says before you. But I haven't the heart to scold, being really awfully pleased with your romantic gift of sauerkraut and frankfort sausages.

Ever so many thanks, but pray let me know whether the *choucroute* is to be boiled, and if so how, exactly, and for how long. It's so excellent *per se* that I would eat it as it is, only I don't want (as a family man) to run any deadly risks.

The stupid Garrett woman disclosed the presence of your pipe only last night. Jessie is, this moment, making up the parcel and instructs me to say that if it had been left in our house you would not have waited so long for it. I should think not! It would have followed you by the very next post. The leaving behind of a pipe is not an incident to be treated lightly. There is unhappiness in it, and profanity, and a deep moral disturbance which no rightly thinking person can contemplate with indifference. Now Jessie *is* a rightly thinking person.

I close this hastily to go into the parcel.

Let us know what's decided as to the little chap[1]—and generally what's happening to you in every way. I hope you have not missed this as much as you would have done your pillow.

To John Galsworthy

Someries, 30 Nov., '08.

DEAREST JACK,

I am ever so glad you find *Raz*[2] interesting. Your criticism as to the IInd part is the very echo of my most worrying thought. And yet . . .

You see, it is all part of the general crookedness of my existence. You will not be surprised to hear that the doing of the 1st part has been very difficult. What you see is the residue of very many pages now destroyed, but by no means wasted from an unmaterial point of view. But good work takes time: to invent an action, a march for the story, which could have dispensed with Part II as it stands, was a matter of meditation, of trying and retrying for goodness knows how long. This I could not afford to do. I went on the obvious lines and on these lines I developed

[1] Norman Douglas's son.

[2] *Razumov.*

my narrative to give it some sort of verisimilitude. In other words, I offered to sell my soul for half a crown,—and now I have neither the soul nor the coin,—(for the novel is not finished yet). A fool's bargain, —no great matter when one is young, but at my age such passages embitter and discourage one beyond expression. I have no heart to think of compressing anything, for I have no illusion as to the quality of the stuff. The thing is "bad-in-itself." It should not be there at all.

I have no doubt as to the success of *Shadows*. Besides containing all the excellence of your best work, it has another, a new, not easily defined element of beauty,—it has a greater ardour, a more masterful moulding of the material,—and with that the larger suggestiveness of a poem. My anxiety to see the MS. was not anxiety in a temporal sense, if I may so express myself.

I am just over a heavy fit of gout,—or perhaps not so heavy as acute. It began on Wednesday and is now ended, all but the lameness which may hang on for weeks or be gone to-morrow.

Borys looks better and Jack is very well. This morning I said to him: "Show me your fists,"—when all of a sudden with the word "punch" he hauled off and hit me in the jaw straight from the shoulder. I was never so surprised in my life. Borys, on the point of going off to school, was inexpressibly delighted. "Won't he know how to fight by and by!" Such, my dear boy, are the delights of paternity.

Dear love to Ada and you.

To Henry James

Someries, Luton.
12 Dec., 1908

TRÈS CHER MAITRE,

They have arrived,—the six of them:[1] I have felt them all in turn and all at one time as it were, and to celebrate the event I have given myself a holiday for the morning, not to read any one of them—I could not settle to that—but to commune with them all, and gloat over the promise of the prefaces. But of these last I have read one already, the preface to *The American,* the first of your long novels I ever read—in '91. This is quite a thrill to be taken thus into your confidence; a strong emotion it is a privilege to be made to feel—*à cinquante ans!* Afterwards I could not resist the temptation of reading the beautiful and touching last ten pages of the story. There is in them a perfection of tone which calmed me, and I sat for a long while with the closed volume

[1] The six first volumes of the Collected Works of Henry James.

in my hand going over the preface in my mind and thinking—that is how it began, that's how it was done!

I thank you for the gift, I thank you before all for the opportunity to breathe in the assurance of your good-will, the fortifying atmosphere of your serene achievement.

Yours most affectionately and gratefully.

To (Sir) Sidney Colvin

Someries.
28 Dec., 1908.

MY DEAR COLVIN,

I've your very welcome letter and Mrs. Colvin's kind message—thanks.

You are very indulgent to my—let us call it—psychology. I've buried myself and yet I don't want to be buried in the least. It is not indolence. Neither is it misanthropy, for if there is any mistrust, it is not of mankind but of myself. I wouldn't go so far as to call it lunacy. It isn't at all that. What it is I could perhaps explain, but it would be sinful to waste paper and ink on such a subject; and as long as your charity prevents you casting stones, I am content to remain gratefully unexplained.

I am glad you think well of the *Set of Six*. I've spent over these stories more time than they are worth; but this is true, I fear, of all my work. The vol. has been generally well received—better, in a sense, than *The Secret Agent,* whose reception has been defined by Mr. Belloc (I think) as "uncertain." The appearance of that word in a distinctly friendly notice of my work (in the *Morning Post*) *donne à penser*. Perhaps that is the very word of the riddle. Man, work, everything is just "uncertain" before the world. And there too may be the concise explanation of my hermit-like ways, which are not really in my character. But enough of that.

The winged rumour is correct. We are coming back to Kent sometime before the springtide sets in. A very small (and poky) cottage has been got ready for us in the village of Aldington, within a stone's throw from the church where I believe Erasmus preached in his time, whether in praise of folly or not I don't know. And by the by, his note too, in a world full of great noises, was considered as "uncertain." *N'est-ce-pas?*

The matter of the *Reminiscences* has been the subject of much hesitation and not a few heart searchings. The defect you point out is manifest to myself and as a matter of fact has been considered. Yes. There it is. And in a sense it expresses a reluctance to start that kind of work at all. That sort of discursiveness gives an air of detachment—interprets really a sincere attitude—I am not a personage for an orderly biography, either

auto or otherwise. It did cost an effort to begin—I assure you. Now there will, in the end, be a book and, who knows? from the rambling discourse a personality of sorts will yet emerge. Meantime this defect saves the pangs of my shyness,—if you like to call it that. I explain, because of all people in the world, I don't want you to think me either stupid or wilfully perverse. I don't mind being thought somewhat foolish—an adept in folly I mean.

I am finishing a confounded difficult novel.[1] But how long that bone will be sticking in my gizzard I can't tell. Meantime it keeps me in agonies within the four walls and renders me unbearable to wife and children. What with the gout (ten days) and the novel, I have been in an atrocious temper. Your letter made me feel human this morning, the first time for I don't know how long. Once more thanks! And pray give my kind regards to Mrs. Colvin.

To Mrs. Galsworthy

17 Jan., '09.

DEAR ADA,

It might have been a serious affair,[2] this passage with the wild bus. A sort of shudder remains from reading Jack's letter with its pooh-poohing reference. I always feel (when I am there) that the bit of Strand in front of Charing Cross Station is about as near Eternity as any spot on earth. Well, since you've escaped, there is nothing more to say,—except a serious warning not to do it again.

The news Jack sends me is just what I wanted to hear,—except, of course, the news of his cold. I suppose he will be off to Manchester tomorrow. His letter does not read as if you were going with him,—but, of course, with the man's negligent epistolary style, one never knows. I think his novels are decidedly better in that respect. Decidedly. What's your opinion? Strictly *entre nous,* be it understood.

As he omits to say how the Riviera profited *you,* we can only hope that you have made a provision of sunshine to carry you through the dreary months,—or the months which would have been dreary but for the promise of two plays and a book! I applaud with all my heart the communication of all these events. I feel somehow that it will work for good. Do you intend to see the Manchester first performance?

But it's "Strife!" "Strife!" We must not talk about it. Yet with that and the book in the full occupation of my thoughts, I feel a premonition

[1] *Under Western Eyes.*

[2] John Galsworthy's "growler" was overturned by a runaway luggage omnibus.

of a great triumphant taking possession of the land. After this confession,—Silence.

In answer to Jack's distinct question, I can only say that I've written 110,000 words in the last 12 months, but of course, *Raz.* is not finished yet.—It is not very far off tho'.—Unless,—unless a batch,—gets torn up suddenly in some moment of imperative inspiration. And that too may happen. Meantime I am scheming how to get away from this place to the little hole in Aldington which has been made ready for us rather nicely, Ford says. We haven't seen it since it has been done up. It is the house on the opposite side of the road next to the cottage in which you saw our desolate tribe last September. Just at the foot of the hill, you know.

C. B. Q. vanquished the gout in due course but I am chary of giving it (the drug) too much free play. I suspect it makes me imbecile for a time, and that's too high a price to pay for life itself, let alone mere freedom from pain. And moreover it would be a fool's bargain, anyway, for write I must, to stave off remorse, despair, etc., etc.,—other things less fanciful too, with, amongst them, a suspicion that will come on now and then that "all this is no good," do what I may.

Excuse this discordant strain; but the fact is that I have just received the accounts of all my publishers, from which I perceive that all my immortal works (13 in all) have brought me last year something under five pounds in royalties. That sort of thing quenches that *joie de vivre* which should burn like a flame in an author's breast and in the manner of an explosive engine drive his pen onward at 30 pages an hour.

Jessie does not let anything quench her flame, bless her. The kids have been fairly well this holiday-time.

A Xmas pudding goes by next post,—in proof of Jessie's unquenchable flame partly,—but mostly as the artless symbol of her affection. If you are both in Manchester it will keep till your return, of course. She didn't chase you with it down to the very Mediterranean, only from fear of the Douane, I believe; but you didn't really think you were to escape this year, did you? Pardon this silly letter, it is all the C. B. Q., you know. I trust in your fortitude. I know *you* will be able to stand it. And I leave to your discretion such passages as may be selected for showing to Jack, always bearing in mind the greater frailness of the masculine intellect and the state of exasperation the rehearsals are certain to provoke. I'll appear promptly in February to hear and be heard without any moderation whatever. Meantime I restrain my runaway pen on the very edge of the paper, as you see. And that also is a proof of my affection &

always yours *de cœur.*

To John Galsworthy

Sunday [1909]

DEAREST JACK,

This is extremely fine and the exhibition of mastery in dealing with psychology and situation gave me unalloyed delight.[1]

At the end of each act I got up and walked for a while in a sort of exultation over the sheer art of the thing. To criticize the psychology, if I had the wish to do so, I would feel myself racially incompetent.

The simplicity of all the characters is from a theatrical point of view admirable. Everything, every individual, is as clear as a bell. Given the milieu, there is never the slightest jar on one's conviction, not a single false note! And the action is interesting all the time! Intensely.

Two remarks I'll make, one on psychology, the other on stage "business."

First:—Studdenham in the last scene seems to me too Olympian just a bit and incidentally the word "plaything" seems (with all deference) to smack a little of the stage "rustic." Why shouldn't he say, "When you got tired of my girl you forfeited your right," or "the girl?"

I have been made slightly uneasy there.

The point of stage business is this:

When Sir William feels hot (while his wife sits shivering) you make him speak to *her*. It's too pointed (though it's a stroke of genius to establish their difference even in the physical effect of the situation). It's too pointed. Some idiot in the audience is sure to laugh at it and start some other donkeys. Now to my mind no risk of that should be run. I think that, letting Lady C. shiver (through the scene, as it were), Sir William might just put a handkerchief to his forehead and mutter "they make infernal fires here" or something of the sort. The intelligent will perceive the trait, the asses will miss it probably, but no opening for an inept guffaw will be given.

It's late, dear Jack. C. Graham was here all day. He is immensely pleased at the prospect of meeting you at lunch somewhere very soon. Elsie Hueffer came in the evening. This is the first free moment I have to-day to write and I am writing after a second reading.

[1] It refers to John Galsworthy's play "The Eldest Son."

To John Galsworthy

29 Mch., 1909.

DEAREST JACK,

What comes out uppermost is the intellectual honesty of your play.[1] That quality,—nay, that great and rare virtue—shines tenfold when set out in the artistic simplicity of your method. There is none of that subtleness akin to decay in your conception of human problems. We have there human beings in their littleness and their heroism presented to us in a work of art with no didactic purpose, but with a moral intention.

Probably you care but little for this fruit of my meditations: but I have been trying to understand, to penetrate the secret of the play's power and the depth of its appeal. For this calm work of sifting the effects I had to descend to the underside of my direct feelings which, you do understand, were deeply engaged. I have tasted in that theatre moments of profound, unquestionable satisfaction. To get at its sources I had, so to speak, to part from your personality, which holds so much of my life-stock of affection. I think I succeeded in getting sufficiently far away, only of course to come back to it with the conviction made up that you are a good servant to the State.

If your personality is to loom large in the mental and emotional history of your time—as I believe it must—the notion of a play dealing with the dramatically intimate side of the country's domestic political life suggests itself to complete a trilogy, of which the first two expressions are "The Silver Box" and "Strife." Thus the three great divisions of the social aspect of our days would be indicated. That party-parliamentarism contains in its qualities and imperfections a drama of conscience capable of being expressed by poignant and interesting action, I have no doubt. The intellectual honesty, the great and simple method are yours. Then, why not try? To strike a blow at the tragi-comic charlatanism inherent in the conduct of human affairs is a task worthy of your gift. I hope you don't think I am meddling. I am not accustomed to keep anything back from you.

To John Galsworthy

Aldington. N. Hythe, Kent.
30 Ap., 1909.

DEAR JACK,

We feared you would be rushed towards the last. Our disappointment of course was great, but your loss is small. I have been beastly seedy,—

[1] After seeing "Strife."

in fact quite ill,—as ill as a man out of bed and knocking about aimlessly can be. It's awful,—awful. Good Dr. Mackintosh was twice down here, —watching his case. It may be I am feeling the spring winds only. But if the spring winds are to affect me in that way then I had better resign from all my dignities and offices and get myself buried without pomp and pageant of any kind.

It's a fact I was too nerveless to answer your good letter at once. You may guess from that how the work progresses. There is really no day without a page,—but what is that? A drop in the ocean.

Thanks, my dear Jack, for your efforts on my behalf. I really feel as if I were cumbering the earth with my existence, doing no good to any one, exhausting the patience of gods and men,—and a sort of intolerable scandal to myself.

Yes. I saw the Frohman declaration and was greatly edified thereby. I haven't heard anything from France as to "To-morrow" and, truth to say, I had forgotten all about it. I shall go on with *Chance* directly this novel is done and at the same time shall write enough to complete a vol: of *Reminiscences.*

Pinker can't do anything with them in the States and gave me to understand that he does not think much of them. I have lived long enough to bear that. However, I differ from him on that matter. Anyhow they permitted me to pay Borys's schooling and some other things. But I don't know whether any more instalments will be needed for the *E. R.*[1]

Yes, I do believe that, in the end, out of these *Rem:* a not altogether contemptible personality will emerge.

I am glad to hear of the comi-tragic play.[2] A jolly good title.

Our dear love to you both.

To John Galsworthy

5 June, 1909.

DEAREST JACK,

I was glad to hear from you.

I have been in bed all last week and am just beginning to pull myself together. The good Mac[3] came down twice flying in his car with medicines, bandages, lotions, etc., etc., cheering me up and putting heart into Jessie, who has been quite extraordinarily worried by this bout of

[1] *Some Reminiscences* were published in the *English Review* till the June issue.

[2] Mr. John Galsworthy's play "The Pigeon."

[3] Dr. Mackintosh.

gout. Well it was pretty bad: the horrible depression worst of all. It is rather awful to lie helpless and think of the passing days, of the lost time. But the most cruel time is afterwards, when I crawl out of bed to sit before the table, take up the pen,—and have to fling it away in sheer despair of ever writing a line. And I've had thirteen years of it, if not more. Anyway, all my writing life. I think that in this light the fourteen vols. (up-to-date) are something of an achievement. But it's a poor consolation.

> The way was long, the wind was cold,
> The minstrel was infernal old:
> His harp, his sole remaining joy,
> Was stolen by an organ boy,—

That's how I feel.

I like immensely your verse in the last *English Review*. The second piece for choice, but as a matter of fact I like best the one I am reading at the time.

Yes, yes. Let us have a long talk. Nothing will be allowed to interfere with that, if I know it. I have been fed up in this connection of late till my gorge rises at the thought of it.

I suppose you were in Berlin on dramatic affairs?

How is dear Ada? You don't say: and after the bad winter she had, one is anxious to know how this rather fantastic spring weather had affected her.

Au revoir then, with our dear love to you both.

To E. V. Lucas

Aldington,
14 June, 1909.

MY DEAR LUCAS,

I write to your ex-address, though I know from Galsworthy that you are already in the country. I daresay this unimportant letter will find you all right.

Could you give me an idea what are the prospects of my friend Douglas's book, now with Mr. Methuen for consideration? Douglas is now in Italy and I haven't heard from him for some time; but I know how anxious he was about his fate when leaving England.

I have heard of the *Spectator* having given a laudatory par: or so to his paper on the "Sirens" in the 6th (I think) number of the *English Review*. If that is so (I haven't myself seen the *Spectator*), then I am very glad for Douglas and highly flattered at having my judg-

ment backed by the calm and pondered authority of the *Spectator*.

In this connection let me mention (for I don't know what you may have heard) that I have been in no sense associated with the *E. R.* except that I wished Hueffer well in his venture. I showed him the Douglas MS. I had by me, which to say the least of it was being as kind to the *Review* as to Douglas. And of course there are my own contributions, which obviously I could not have placed elsewhere—not because they are improper but for other reasons, one of them being that editors are not falling over each other in their eagerness to get at my stuff—oh dear no! This is absolutely the whole extent of my connection.

If you don't like long letters I apologize for the dimensions of this one with the greater confidence, because I am conscious of not being a great sinner in that respect—I mean not an habitual sinner.

Please remember me to Mrs. Lucas.

To Norman Douglas

Aldington,
18 June, 09.

MY DEAR GOOD DOUGLAS,

I've been ill—in bed and out of bed for the last month. Not a word written!

But I have managed to get off a pressing note to Lucas asking him to prod Methuen. No answer as yet.

Galsworthy writes me that he is most anxious to make your acquaintance, should you be in London in the latter half of this year. He was here for lunch and he talked of you a good bit. He is a good man to know from more than one point of view.

The *Spect*[or] gave your "Sirens" article a good notice—in fact a quite remarkable one for the cold cautious paper it is. People have noticed it too as far as I can judge from the rumours reaching me. Pinker was here and asked me to tell you that he is ready to take a good deal of trouble with your work should you wish to give him the opportunity. That's a pretty good sign. The man scents a profitable author.

I entreat you earnestly to try and throw your impressions of Messina into *the form of a story*.

Do try, my dear fellow. I believe you would get both money and fame that way. Whereas an article or a small book would bring little. The public here hardly remembers the earthquake now. Yet in the guise of fiction you would be read and probably appreciated. You need not make it a conventional novel or story, just try to invent some action and hang a picturesque rendering of your impressions upon it.

If you can do it at all, please try.

I say no more just now. This fit of gout has literally ruined me by stopping my work at a critical moment.

To E. V. Lucas

Aldington,
23 June, '09.

MY DEAR LUCAS,

Thanks for your letter. Douglas won't be able to accept Methuen's proposal for the best of all reasons—because he can't afford it; and indeed one couldn't advise him in that sense even if he had the money.

I fully share your opinion of the *E. R.* My *Reminiscences* have come to an end now, and of course the fate of the *E. R.* is very uncertain I hear. So I don't suppose I'll ever appear in its pages any more.

Since you have mentioned my *Reminiscences* I am emboldened to ask your advice as to continuing them. I don't suppose I could serialize them anywhere, but I am thinking of a volume (or even two short vols. of say 65,000 words each) for later on, with an interval of a couple of years. I know that the form is unconventional, but it is not so unusual as it seems. It has been thought out. I hope still that from that unmethodical narrative a personality can be made to emerge in a sufficiently interesting manner. My case (as before the public) being not only exceptional but even unique, I felt I could not proceed in cold blood on the usual lines of an autobiography. However, before going on I would value exceedingly your opinion (if you would give it to me) as to the discretion of doing it at all.

It saddens me to hear that you too are subject to these moments of cruel blankness when one's writing life seems to come to an end. I live in the constant dread of these visitations. They have been too frequent of late. One sets one's teeth and hangs on to hope with a desperate grip. That's my experience. And somehow the mind survives these temporary extinctions. But how long these resurrections will go on, who can tell?

To John Galsworthy

Aldington nr. Hythe, Kent,
13 July, 1909.

DEAREST JACK,

I was prevented from giving an instalment of my *R'ces*[1] to the June No. of the *English Review*, on which I counted to pay for Borys's

[1] *Some Reminiscences.*

schooling. I recovered mentally so slowly that it was simply impossible to write anything,—not even a letter. I made desperate efforts to do something but could not finish two pages,—not two pages!—in time. So I had to give it up: a very awful failure to live with. It almost unnerved me utterly.

Meantime, fearing something of that sort, I had offered the *Rems.,* which have already appeared here, to Col. Harvey (Harpers') for serial publication in the *N. American Review* or his other two publications for £80, which was not much to ask. I had previously various communications from his henchmen (Brooks amongst others) protesting of his, Harvey's, great admiration for my work and of his wish to be my *only* publisher in the States. Would you believe that to that proposal which, after all, was a matter of business,—*I haven't even had a reply.* It's five weeks ago. Not a word! I can't tell you how bad I feel at this treatment. I can't even imagine a reason of it: for it seemed to me that an offer from J. Conrad deserved at least to be civilly declined. But it seems not.

I had a letter from Bliss Carman the other day. He edits now the *Gentlemen's Journal* (in N. York) and asks me for a story. I would do one for him, but I must stick to my novel. I can only do that just now. I am not equal to extra writing at present. But I will send him something presently and I suppose he will pay me decently.

To Ford Madox Hueffer

31 July, 1909.

DEAR HUEFFER,

If you think I have discredited you and the *Review,* why then it must be even so. And as far as the Editor of the *E. R.* is concerned, we will let it go at that, with the proviso that I don't want to hear anything more about it.

But as writing to a man with a fine sense of form and a complete understanding, for years, of the way in which my literary intentions work themselves out, I wish to protest against the words,—*Ragged condition.*

It is so little *ragged* to my feeling, and in point of literary fact, that in the book (if the book ever appears) the *whole* of the contribution to the *E. R.* as it stands now without the addition of a single word shall form the Part First.

It expresses perfectly my purpose of treating the literary life and the sea life on parallel lines, with a running reference to my early years. It treats of the inception of my first book and of my first contact "psychologically and de facto" with the sea. It begins practically with

the first words of appreciation of my writing I ever heard and ends with the first words ever addressed to me personally in the English tongue.[1] And actually the very phrase ending the 7th instalment is to my mind an excellent terminal, a perfect poise carrying out the spirit of the work.

All this is not got up *ad hoc*. I have exposed this view in a letter written to certain publishers in America a fortnight ago. It is another instalment which would make the thing ragged. It would have to begin another period and another phase. On a dispassionate view I see it so clearly that nothing on earth would induce me to spoil the thing as it now stands by an irrelevant single instalment. I will say no more, except to add that my contributions were for a *person* not for an *editor*. The *E. R.*, I hear, is no longer your property and there is, I believe, another circumstance which for a purely personal reason (exceptionally personal, I mean) makes me unwilling to contribute anything more to the *E. R.* This reason has, of course, nothing to do with you, you understand. It is not a critical reason. A pure matter of feeling. If I have discredited the *R.*, well, I must bear the disgrace.

To J. B. Pinker

Aldington, Nr. Hythe, Kent.
Monday, Oct., 1909.

MY DEAR PINKER,

Thanks for your letter of Wednesday. I completely agree with your view of the transaction. Better show the whole book. Henley took the *"Narcissus"* on the strength of 3 chapters—but he was Henley—a man, not a cheese-monger or something nearly equivalent; and the *New Review* is now an embodied phase in the history of English letters.

As to the kind people who inquire whether I have given up writing, you may tell them that in the last 20 months C. has written nearly 160 thousand words—each *one* of which has some meaning—and under such mental and physical conditions as would have made nine out of ten of them break down time after time. This is not, I admit, what the situation requires—but we shall feed it up with "production" presently. Never fear.

The history of my contribution to the *D[ai]ly Mail* is this: Reply prepaid wire asking me if I would write 1200 words on Waratah case. My reply, Yes, twelve guineas. A wire accepting terms. I wrote the column that night *after* I felt I could do no more then with the novel. Nothing was laid aside for it. And if it had been I would not have cared—not a

[1] It refers to *Some Reminiscences*.

damn. I sent on the check to the boy's schoolmaster and anyhow it's not enough to cover the quarter. I want £5. 12/8d more. You might send it to me. The pension business [1] seems fallen through this year, tho' Gosse wrote to Jack in *Septer.* that it was receiving the best consideration. I was fool enough to reckon on it to a certain extent.

Salvator might have told you I had a visit from a man out of the Malay Seas.[2] It was like the raising of a lot of dead—dead to me, because most of them live out there and even read my books and wonder who [the] devil has been around taking notes. My visitor told me that Joshua Lingard made the guess: "It must have been the fellow who was mate in the *Vidar* with Craig." That's me right enough. And the best of it is that all these men of 22 years ago feel kindly to the Chronicler of their lives and adventures. They shall have some more of the stories they like.

Well, I must stop.

To William Rothenstein

Aldington, Nr. Hythe, Kent.
15 Nov., '09.

DEAR OLD WILL,

Yes. I want to and I shall before long. The last year and a half has been like hell, from which I have just emerged thanks to a good volunteer doctor who took me in hand, I believe, only just in time. But twenty months have gone already over a novel and now I *must* finish it—or I am totally undone. I daren't budge from the desk. Moreover, the first of my books in French translation is about to appear. It's the *Nigger:* and I have proofs sent me for correction, which means a lot of writing in the margins. How could I resist the chance of putting something of my real self into the translator's prose? And with that I am still shaky a bit and subject to sudden accesses of mental exhaustion.

If I did not write to you for so long it's only because there was nothing to write,—nothing that you as a friend would have been glad to hear. As to my affection I am sure you've never doubted it any more than I could doubt yours. The thought of your friendship has often comforted me.

The fourteenth year of my writing life draws to an end, and when I look at the result I am appalled. I speak from a worldly point of view, but then we live in the world and its weights and measures impose themselves upon our judgment,—yes, even upon our feelings. One needn't

[1] A Civil List pension.

[2] Captain C. M. Marris, to whom, *'Twixt Land and Sea* was dedicated later on.

be particularly vile and base to suffer a little from that truth. And there are just 14 published volumes. Not a great tale. But you know as well as anybody that of these years a full third must be taken off for illness alone,—not speaking of other pieces of bad luck. So I don't think I've been indolent or even unduly slow, taking into consideration the nature of my work. I mention this so that some day you should, at need, defend my memory: for I am pretty certain of coming in for some hard sayings, —unless indeed no one ever says anything,—which is quite possible, too.

I do really want to see you all,—and like Antæus, the earth,—touch some warm friendship to regain a little strength and hope.

To William Rothenstein

Aldington,
17 Dec., 1909.

DEAREST WILL,

Don't you think that if I could possibly spare the time I wouldn't rather take a day and come and see you and yours to whom my heart goes out many times a week? Here I've been 2 years writing a novel which is not finished. Two years! Of which surely one half has been illness, complicated by a terrible moral stress. Imagine yourself painting with the Devil jogging your elbow *all the time*. But you, who are one of the most intelligent men I know, or know of, and a stylist also (because you are,—I have been looking at your "Goya" only the other day), will know what a torture that sort of thing is when the effort and hindrance are mental. It's to make you realize how really unfit I am for what I call the casual intercourse of mankind. And the truth also is, my dear Will, that we live here now in such conditions,— crowded into four tiny rooms in half a cottage,—that I really don't like to receive strangers, even the most admiring and the best disposed. You must charge me with littleness of mind: we must take the world as it is: and indeed there is some concern for the dignity of letters in my reluctance.

I speak to you here as to a second self and thus I cannot conceive you taking it ill. Perhaps I am unreasonable. But to-day, in the second week of my fifty-second year, a failure from the worldly point of view and knowing well that there can be no change,—that this must go on *usque ad finem*,—I may perhaps be allowed a little unreason. Well, no more, just now. I will mention that I haven't seen you for more than a year, Galsworthy for nine months, that I have been in town for about six hours in March last and not since. And if you think that I am indulging in a capricious savagery of disposition, you are mistaken.

To Norman Douglas

Aldington,
23 Dec., 1909.

DEAR DOUGLAS,

I don't know what you think of me. You can be no more disgusted than I am. I simply couldn't write to you—tho' God knows—I wanted to very badly. There is nothing to say. We have barely existed. As for myself, all I can say is that I wonder at it.

The Marwoods [1] bought a small farm and are settled down. The very echoes of the great upheaval have died out.

The novel [2] hangs on the last 12,000 words, but there's neither inspiration nor hope in my work. It's mere hard labour for life—with this difference, that the life convict is at any rate out of harm's way—and may consider the account with his conscience closed; and this is not the case with me. I envy the serene fate and the comparative honesty of the gentlemen in gray who live in Dartmoor. I do really, I am not half as decent or half as useful. Health is better. My wife is as usual. The kids too. And nothing is any good! It's a horrible feeling and I can't shake it off for more than a day or two at a time.

All the same, don't give me up in your thoughts entirely. In the light of a "tormented spirit" I am not to be altogether despised. What are you doing? Are you ever coming back?

To John Galsworthy

Monday night [1909].

DEAREST JACK,

Poor Ada [3] is having a horribly rough time this year. And the weather is keeping as atrocious as it can be too!

The French proofs of the *Nigger* coming in for correction complicate matters. It means a lot of margin writing. And how can I let it pass? Apart from my affections I have nothing in the world but my books. On the other hand, Mac [4] writes with some authority and some right too demanding from me not to endanger and perhaps destroy his good work by putting on too heavy a strain. However, I walk a couple of

[1] Marwood and Mrs. Marwood. Marwood had taken a part in the creation of the *English Review* and had become afterward one of J. C.'s best friends.
[2] *Under Western Eyes.*
[3] Mrs. John Galsworthy.
[4] His doctor, Dr. Mackintosh.

hours and sit for no more than 10 to 11 hours. I think that's strain enough for a man who knows that when this bout is over, there can be no lying back (unless in illness) and that this sort of thing must be kept up, and moreover that even if kept up, it won't be good enough anyhow. Sufficient moral tenacity is all I pray for, not to save me from taking to drink, because I couldn't even if I wanted to, but from the temptation to throw away the oar. And I have known some good men do that too, saying: "It's no use." Then was my turn to keep the boat head to sea for fourteen solid hours. Yes. *Moi qui vous parle* have done that thing just thirty years ago,—all but.[1] I wish sometimes I had remained at sea, which, had I honestly stuck to it, would no doubt be rolling now over my head.

Poor Nellie[2] still hangs between life and death. The danger now is of her sinking from sheer weakness. At best it means months in the hospital and then we shall have to look for a convalescent home.

I think, dearest Jack, that it would be better not to add importunity to—er—mendicancy. Those people are very busy. After they have given everybody the "right to work" and strung up all the horrid Lords to lanterns up and down Pall Mall, Piccadilly and all around Buckingham Palace, the writing of novels shall no doubt become (like maternity) a "municipal function" with an eight-hour day and a living wage: and then perhaps I shall be offered the chance, along with the crowd, of becoming a government employé,—the worthy fate and the only refuge of all sorts of failures under the new dispensation which dawns over our heads. But let it come. Have you seen that case to-day of a poor miserable man with a baby dead practically of starvation and a sick wife being *summoned for the poor rate!!!* It appears that he couldn't speak in Court for tears and handed over a letter written by his wife. Have you seen it? It's terrible. Summoned for his poor rate! That's how officialism works, and indeed must work. That little case opens vistas both comic and appalling. Do, dearest Jack, come over as soon as you can and bring us good news of Ada,—our dear love to her. I really can't come to town,—and yet I would give anything for a talk with you. *Razumov will* be something when it's done. I haven't the heart to spoil him.

[1] This refers probably to the episode of the *Palestine,* not thirty, but twenty-six years before, in 1883; the episode which J. C. has depicted at the end of *Youth.*

[2] Their servant.

To John Galsworthy

Aldington, Hythe, Kent.
Tuesday [1910.]

DEAREST JACK,

Thanks for your letter. I am trying to work as fast as I can without knocking my feeble brain silly.

I'll report to you soon how I am *really* getting on. All that went before, mere trial runs so to speak. I have been also interrupted. Hugh Clifford returned from Ceylon, turned up last Friday. On Sat. a young American writer who has been with Roosevelt in S. Africa arrived for the day. The greatest news is that Mrs. Ted Sanderson has discovered in herself a talent for writing and that the Ex-President has been so struck that he placed three of her S. A.[1] sketches with *Scribners' Magazine.* They seem very well and happy over there.

Same young man brought a formal message from the only Teddy. He would have invited himself to come and see me only too busy with official festivities.

Many, many thanks, my dear best Jack. Our dear love to Ada. How is she? This weather is not very good.

To John Galsworthy

17 May, '10.

DEAREST JACK,

I finished the revise of *Raz.*[2] on the night of Wednesday last, say a week ago. For the next 24 hours I lay supine but not so broken up as I feared. Then I had to write a letter to good Robert,—as a matter of fact I had to write two letters. The second went off yesterday. Between whiles I went to bed and gasped. I did not even attempt to write to you. I thought that Garnett would let you know that the book was out of my hands at last, and that the stage of negotiation has been reached. He has been most friendly and wonderfully kind, volunteering to read over and correct the clean final copy. With superimposed revisions there were a good many phrases without grammar and even without sense to be found in the rough typed copy. And I dreaded the task of wading through all that shallow, sticky stuff again.

[1] South African.
[2] *Razumov:* i. e., *Under Western Eyes.*

I am but a wretched convalescent as yet, after all. Two painful ankles and one painful wrist (the left luckily) keep me in a state of uneasy irritation. I just can hobble along for a few yards. My voice too has not come back properly. At times I am hardly audible. But that doesn't matter much except that Jackolo [1] imitates my extinct tones, while scolding his favourite Teddy-bear, to perfection. The other day, I understand, he gave to some yokels an exhibition of my limping which astonished them not a little. All this is done in the innocence of his heart. He goes through these performances with the utmost gravity. He's much like the other in his devotion to birds, flowers and engines. Borys is going to try for Ox. and Camb. preliminary. He went back to Luton for another term. While here he gave me much of his time, and was really of great assistance in the arranging of MS. He put in order for me 600 pp., all unnumbered and considerably shuffled, working very methodically and with a quiet perseverance for an hour or so every morning. With one hand only one cannot do that sort of thing easily (and in bed at that). So I was really glad to have him to help. Going off at this railway station, he said to Jessie, "I really think I've done some good to Dad." He certainly comforted me not a little.

I am thus coming back to the world. Yet that isn't exactly it. It's very much like coming out of one little hell into another. Don't think I am ungrateful to gods and men (and of all men to you) by saying this. One can't help that feeling. I am glad enough to have changed one hell for another, for I do not feel either helpless or hopeless. On the contrary, there is a sort of confidence,—but indeed it may be only the sign of an incipient softening of the brain! However, I am glad enough to feel it on any terms. Anything better than black depression, which may be the sign of religious mania.

About this same brain: it is not equal to prolonged effort. I am writing this in 10 minute snatches. That's the limit at present. Nevertheless I am going to begin to-morrow a short story,—if the devil's in it. It's to be comical in a nautical setting and its subject is (or *are*) potatoes. Title: "A Smile of Fortune." [2] May it be a good omen! Only I don't quite believe in omens.

We have secured a house. I can't stay on in this (comparatively expensive) hole. It has become odious to me after this illness. I need that amount of change.

It's a farmhouse with biggish rooms and 1½ acres of orchard standing in the fields and surrounded by 750 acres of unpreserved woods, where

[1] John Conrad, the younger son of the novelist.
[2] The first of the three tales in *'Twixt Land and Sea.*

I am at liberty to roam.[1] Five miles from Ashford and only a mile from Ham Street station, which has the same service as Smeeth, only travellers must change in Ashford. It is a very attractive place and cheap at £45. It may be folly to take it—but it's either that or a break-down: for my nerves are just on the balance. I require perfect silence for my work,—and I can get that there. And as a fact the days of 20-pounds-a-year farmhouses are over. This is as cheap as almost any place we have tried for this last year and a half.

I won't write any more just now. I wanted you to know that I am getting hold again. I trust, dear Jack, you have saved me for better things. The post is ready to go.

Our dear love to you both.

To (Sir) Hugh Clifford

Aldington.
19 May, '10

MY DEAR CLIFFORD,

This being eminently a case for Christian charity I won't make this letter long. Indeed I am not very fit for writing much as yet. Your letter to my wife has comforted me immensely.

I am too lame (in both feet) to come and see you in London. I am also somewhat shaky all over. It seems I have been very ill. At the time I did not believe it, but now I begin to think that I must have been. And what's more, I begin to see that the horrible nervous tension of the last two years (of which even my wife knows nothing) had to end in something of this sort.

Perhaps it was the only way of relief?

I am ashamed to show my face to you even from a distance—in writing. Yet I shall be brazen to the extent of asking whether you will come and see me here when you have time. I don't want to bore you with the story of my life since we last set eyes on each other—but a few words may be said which will partly explain away the ugly appearances.

Shortly before my illness an Island-skipper came to see me.[2] A soft-eyed black-bearded man married to a Patani girl of good family, with a house in Penang on the beach and a small plantation of rubber trees. He came here to see his people in Durham. He wrote to me, "I am like a crow in a strange country. May I come to see you?" We talked of you and your books for hours.

[1] Capel House, where the novelist was to live from June, 1910, till March, 1919.

[2] Captain C. M. Marris.

To John Galsworthy

Aldington.
18 June, '10.

DEAREST JACK,

I received the volume [1] the day before yesterday and laid it aside till this afternoon. So much of the delay is due to my deliberate desire to await a composed state of mind. The rest is Heinemann's fault. I tell you this because the inscription, I notice, is dated on the seventh.

I read "The Portrait" with greatly awakened curiosity and some emotion. It is a very fine offering: a study, almost an analysis, which yet rises to be a creation. There is harmony in it, a balance, as in that commemorated life. Thus he is fortunate to the end! From my glimpses of him,[2] three, I think, altogether,—I believe that he would have liked these pages, the serene twilight feeling of that prose enshrining his memory.

I suppose that I am now the only human being in these Isles who thinks Myerbeer a great composer: and I am an alien at that and not to be wholly trusted. I remember well you telling me of your Father's liking for Turgeniev. It seemed always a very mysterious thing till you enlightened me. Yet it must have been that,—the uncommon worship of beauty.

These pages set apart, I think that, without doubt, "The Neighbours" is the *clou* of that gallery. Roughly speaking it's all gold, without the slightest alloy. The total absence of grimness is miraculous,—it makes for perfection. And the finest descriptive passage of the book is there too,—the moonlight night. I lingered over it in sheer delight. But I've done that over more than one page.

Next to that I place "Once More," and then the "Fisher of Men" as a unique presentment of despotic temperament expressing itself in fanaticism of evangelical kind. "A Prisoner" stands in a category by itself in the mastery of expression and depth of feeling. The "Miller of Dee" is terrific when quietly thought over. The "Lime Tree" as a prose poem has no flaw that I could see and I've read it several times. It captivates. "The Choice" with its amazing and tragic prayer gets home to one with the sheer humanity of it. It is not only for the sake of old times that one welcomes the two "Ferrand" stories. They are good: parables worthy of the Book of Pharisees. Quite! I like "Compensation" best. I don't know why. Perhaps only because it is new to

[1] *A Motley*, by John Galsworthy.
[2] John Galsworthy's father.

me. The other of course is larger,—more significant and before all more tender.

But why "A Reversion to Type" was ever written by you, I can not understand! Anyone might have written it. Why, I myself could have written it,—not so well,—but still I could have written it. You will, please, take that as the strongest expression of blame I can lay hands on at the moment. It's hard to believe that it is by the same man who has written "A Consummation." That is immense! After reading the first page I got up and opened the window to give my grin room to expand freely. But when I came to the part where the "Man of Genius" introduces the "Critic," the grin exploded and displaced some tiles on the roof. It's perfectly delectable. Every word tells. The turn of the phrasing when looked at from the inside is irresistibly comic. Oh! It is a pungent piece. And isn't it beastly sarcastic too! It's precious!

Now as to the whole. There is a unity in the collection, the effect of mastery which never falters now and of a steady vision. That's on the surface. Deeper in there is the quality of your inspiration that in every subject, in every mood, is always true to the worship of beauty, with words ever ready, ever worthy to express that creed.

I haven't yet finished my story. It's no use worrying. What can't be can't be, and there's an end of it. I am not able to walk any distance yet. For the move Jessie sends me off to the Gibbons [1] in Trosley. It's a short journey and I shall be able then to sit all the time with my feet up. I go on the 23rd and return to the new house on the 26th. Jessie takes possession on the 24th. God knows how it will turn out. I hope Ada and you may find time soon to come and see us there,—yes, while the days are warm and long. I am frightened of London yet.

Clifford (Sir Hugh) back from Ceylon is very anxious to make your acquaintance. Did I tell you he was here to see me? Marwood comes every Thursday afternoon. What is vexing is that my voice very often fails me suddenly. Did you know that Sanderson is coming home? His wife is, I believe, already here. I had a letter from Mrs. Sanderson *la mère*.

Our dear love to you both.

To John Galsworthy

Capel House, Kent.
26th June, 1910.

DEAREST JACK,

On returning from the Gibbons yesterday afternoon I found your

[1] Perceval Gibbon, the novelist, and Mrs. Gibbon.

letter. When giving it to me, Jessie woman-like shed a few tears. It's good to have somebody to cry for one a little on fitting occasions. For myself I shall keep the lid down on the well of my emotions. It's a question whether I even could lift it off. The hot spring boils somewhere deep within. There's no doubt of that: but if uncovered nothing would come out but a little vapour, a thin mist of words which would appear to me contemptible and to you probably superfluous. No man would be what you are to me for the sake of mere spoken thanks.

On leaving Ashford all alone, on my first outing since the illness, I felt all of a shake and utterly lost without Jessie. Of course notwithstanding our good resolutions neither Gibbon nor I did a line of work while I was in Trosley. He rushed me about on his side-car motor-bike, storming up hills and flying down vales as if the devil were after him. I don't know whether that is particularly good for the nerves, but on return from these excursions I felt ventilated, as though I were a bag of muslin, frightfully hungry and almost too sleepy to eat. No other harm seems to have been done.

At the very moment of leaving Aldington last Tuesday, I had a letter from Bashford [1] which I enclose here. I need not tell you that it was totally unexpected. But here was this thing thrown at my head! Wonderful! After hurriedly reflecting upon this miracle, I answered as noted: and now I am in possession of another letter offering 5 guineas per column and cheering me on to have a try. No formal agreement of any sort and liberty for either party to terminate the arrangement at any time.

I am very tempted. My view is that nothing unfair to Pinker will be done if I accept. I shall take one day of the week (or its equivalent in snatches) for that article. If I find I can't do it in that time I shall throw the thing up. *Voilà!* At the same time I must consider him entitled to his commission on everything I earn, for that, I believe, is the "custom of the trade." What do you think?

I am writing to Bashford accepting provisionally and asking him to send me a couple of books in the course of this week. Should P. object, I shall simply leave off after an article or two.

Our best love to Ada and yourself. How is she? You don't say anything of her health, so we trust it is tolerable.

[1] Proposing a regular contribution to the *Daily Mail.*

To Norman Douglas

Capel House,
28th June, 1910.

MY DEAR DOUGLAS,

I am a pig for not having written before—but then I don't care. I've lost all self-respect and have abandoned myself to a debauch of illness and laziness and . . . but the list would be too long.

Seriously—you may imagine what it was to have four months taken out of one's life. I am all of a shake yet; I feel like a man returned from hell and look upon the very world of the living with dread.

If it had not been for Galsworthy, I don't know what I would have done. He has seen to everything. *Enfin.* Now I am trying to pick up the dropped thread—with rather nerveless fingers as yet.

This is only a preliminary letter; only to tell you how glad I am that you are writing a book—your second. Tell me: what has been done with the first—The *Syren Land?* I seem to remember last year only like a dream. What do you intend to do with the second? Tell me all about yourself. Meantime, our dear love.

To R. B. Cunninghame Graham

Capel House.
13th July, 1910.

TRÈS CHER AMI,

It is most kind of you. The cigarettes arrived yesterday evening, but I was finishing an article for the *Dy. Mail* [1] (I am supposed to have a column every Saturday) and put off my thanks till this morning when, behold Jackolito's [2] *boina* was duly delivered. He is immensely fascinated by it and I see him in it outside my window devastating the flower-bed. He's a little devil, but the red cap suits him exceedingly and charms his mother very much. That really good woman (tho' she doesn't want a vote) is delighted with the *cabuya* cloth. You are spoiling us no end. And it is so exceedingly nice to be spoiled by you that I have no heart to protest.

Le gentil ménage was extremely gratified at having met you. You

[1] Either "Existence after Death Implied by Science," published in the *Daily Mail,* July 16, 1910, or "Quiet Days in Spain," *Daily Mail,* July 23, 1910.

[2] John Conrad, the younger of the novelist's two sons.

see, to so many young men, you are not only a great stylist but also a great romantic figure. No man of genuine talent (and Gibbon is that) can remain unmoved by what you write and indifferent to what you say.

Don't forget the visit in the autumn. We won't talk of dates. A word from you to say you are coming is always most welcome here. And as the days will be well shortened by then you ought really to let us put you up for the night. *Enfin,—vous ferez ce qui vous conviendra le mieux.*

Well,—so long,—as they say in Australia.

Pray remember us and give our duty to your Mother. We were so glad to hear she was well.

To John Galsworthy

27th Aug., '10.

DEAREST JACK,

I've got out of the habit of using the pen, my last story[1] (now in its 22nd thousand of words) being all written in pencil for Jessie's typing. Another couple of thousand, which I *must* do by next Monday, will end it. This will mean over 20 thous. words in two months, because I did not really start till July. June's work was mere fooling,—not on purpose, of course. I was still too limp to grasp the subject and most of the pages written then have been cancelled in type-script. It was strangely nerveless bosh.

Of course I will do the *Rescue*. To tell you the truth, I've forgotten that stuff. I've a hazy recollection of something lightly inflated and verbose. But no doubt I can match it well enough out of the rubbish floating in my softened brain. Only I would like to know that Heinemann is a consenting party. . . . The book is H.'s absolutely,—and if I never finished it, the fragment, as it stands, were I to die to-morrow, would be worth £500 to him,—unless it is an allusion of my overweening vanity.

My only objection to the *Rescue* would be that it does not advance me very much, whereas *Chance* would have been a long step. But on the other hand, as you say, the enterprise looks easier.

In a day or so, when I send Pinker the end of the "Smile of Fortune" (a good short serial,—there is a market for that and I hope he won't part with it for sevenpence), I shall ask him to forward me the typed

[1] "A Smile of Fortune," finished on the 30th of the same month.

copy of *Rescue*. It will take me a week to read and think myself into a proper frame of mind.

I've a swollen elbow (no pain), two sore ankles, my voice comes and goes in a very entertaining manner. But I certainly can write in this place. That is quite all right. Jessie keeps up her end, but she is very, very lame and begins to feel it,—I can see that. Poor Borys has failed in his exam: and goes about with a long face rather. From a certain point of view, it'll do him good: he was getting too cocky. And I don't want to let him go into a new school with the impression of that failure on him: he shall go back to Luton for another term. House wrote assuring me that the boy did work well and steadily, notwithstanding a very bothersome cold which lasted over six weeks. He has just stopped coughing and I am so glad not to hear that sound that I am not so much cast down as I thought I would be. Jackolo, very slender and vivacious, looks like a sprite and behaves like one. Our dearest love.

To E. L. Sanderson

Capel House,
2 Sept., 1910.

DEAREST TED,

I was silent, while expecting you, simply because I was pushing on with a long short-story,[1] which I have just finished. When working under pressure, I simply *can't* write letters. Jessie truly might have dropped you a line; but she too was extremely busy, and—as I said—we expected every moment to hear from you.

Don't miss me, dear old boy, whoever else you miss. You and yours are always in my thoughts.

We trust that when you come, it will be with your wife. I've been immensely interested by Dawson's account of her literary work. We would feel very unhappy if we could not see her this time. Just name a day and come to Ashford. I'll be there to meet you with a car for the last 5 miles of the journey into this sylvan wilderness.

I am glad to hear that you are thinking of the navy for your dear boy. Is it his own idea? Of course he's doing well. It was enough to look at him to see that he is of the sort that "does well."

Yes, this place is all right. I can work here. We are surrounded by woods and the soil is clay, but the house is sympathetic,—which Somerries was not.

[1] "A Smile of Fortune."

I am just beginning to pick up the threads of existence after the horrible nightmare of my long illness: seven months I may say of my declining life wiped off at one fell swoop. I am not quite myself yet.

Nothing could cheer me up more than to hear that you and your family are well and happy,—may the gods never grow jealous!

Remember us most affectionately to your dear wife. This letter does not seem worth reading much, but I feel somewhat collapsed after finishing my first piece of work this year. So no more.

To Mrs. E. L. Sanderson

Capel House.
Sunday, Sept. [1910.]

MY DEAR HELEN,

All these sketches[1] have the quality without which neither beauty nor, I am afraid, truth are effective; that is they are interesting in themselves. Thus one may say safely that you have the root of the matter. Yes. It is there. I've spent all yesterday with your pages and so the impression being made and even assimilated, I've slept on it. *La nuit porte conseil,*—as you know.

As to what sort of *conseil,* that's another matter. I am not very fit to give advice. That is an especial talent. The few remarks that I offer are not valuable in themselves: they can be only worth something in the way of stimulus for self-examination. You have an individuality which *can* express itself. There's no doubt of that. So a seed in the ground expresses itself, manifests itself, in plant and flower. What is necessary is cultivation.

I understand now perfectly what you meant when you said that your subjects presented themselves to you in a very short form. You must let your gift of expression expand freely, so as to touch what may seem irrelevant to the matter in hand. The apparently irrelevant is often the illuminative. You must never be afraid of remote connections: you must let your mind range widely about your subject. This is the more necessary because your vision is very direct, very clear. Your expression too is very direct and certainly not obscure: but it is not always sufficiently precise.

You must try to say things fully: but do not imagine that I would lead you into verbosity. It is not mere words that I recommend but,—alas!—more toil.

I find it rather difficult to explain what is in my mind. Generally

[1] Some South African sketches written by Mrs. E. L. Sanderson.

I would say that your prose, full of merits as it is, wants "stringing up." If we could have an hour together with the pages before us, I could make my meaning clear enough. I say this with confidence, because as a matter of fact our ways of thinking and of looking at things are not dissimilar. However I have taken the liberty to take the last page of the "Spirit of the Land" and make use of it to illustrate what I would be at in my dumb way. But for goodness' sake don't suspect me of setting up a model for your writing. You have and you must keep your own way of saying what you have got to say.

The extract from the diary interested me very much as being a short story. And it is good. The general effect, however, is too harsh. I have asked myself, why? I think that the fault lies in the want of atmosphere. We see these people in the flesh and, as it were, in vacuo. It needs a little more detail. For instance, we don't know how the poor little woman came to marry Owen. His attitude towards his wife is indicated, but you don't say anything of her attitude towards him. A little of that sort of detail is necessary to humanize the story. As it is, it seems written only to show up Miss Anstruther: and that's all right. I am with you there. But a short story should, before all, be a human episode.

This is too little of the "Moving Tides" to form an opinion of it: but the charm of the pages before me is undeniable. I am very curious to see what you will make of this beginning. I like "Safe Home" immensely. Of the Scribner papers, I put "The Spirit of the Land" first, and "On Leave" next. But "The Gramophones" is an excellent sketch too. I could talk about them all with you for a couple of hours with great pleasure for myself, if not with profit for you. I am a poor critic,—and what's worse, I may be a misleading one. You see I've nothing but my instinct to guide me and no great facility in expressing my point of view. So pray don't put too much trust in what I say.

Jessie has been reading the sketches with extreme delight. She sends her dear love. Believe me always your affectionate friend and servant.

* * *

I hope you won't suspect me of the intention of teaching you. You have your own style, your own expression. The alterations on the page are merely illustrative of my saying that your prose wants a little "bracing up." For instance *A* is a simple re-arrangement, the picture of the lilies starring, etc., etc., being completed before the effect of surprise is mentioned. In *B* and *D,* I have erased a few words which detract from the *actuality* of the impression. This is a purely descriptive passage, in which any suggestion of action is detrimental. It weakens the effect. At *C* I've added the word *wonder,* because wonder is one of the

conditions of the childhood of the world. Greater precision, you see, and at the same time a larger statement helpful for the main ideas of the page.

E. In the sentence crossed out there was an implied change of mood, from vision to dreaming. In a passage built up of visual impression, it was out of place,—it seemed to me. The tone must be preserved, always.

F. Something truly pagan is too vague. That's what I meant when I said (in the letter) that your expression, tho' direct, was sometimes not precise enough. In letters suggestiveness itself,—a great quality—must be obtained by precise expression. I feel with you that there is "something truly pagan in the mystery, etc., etc., etc."—but the sentence in itself means nothing. To awaken a responsive feeling, something exact must be said. What is paganism? The pagan piety was an emotion evoked by the wonder, harm and fear of the visible world. I think that in this instance you meant the suggestion of fear, dread, "in the mystery of deserts," etc., etc. I may be wrong. My sentence certainly is not good in itself but as an example it will serve. In writing and especially in descriptive writing one must guard oneself against the *"à peu près,"* —the horrid danger of the "near enough."

G. I re-arranged this passage. I think the construction is better thus. In descriptive writing one must either evoke images or make statements. The words *strange presence* are neither image nor statement. *Power,* instead of *presence,* is I think all right. *Compelling* I don't like very much. In view of what follows *fatal* might do.

Lower down I change *shores* for *birthright.* Less precise certainly but a more suggestive word.

It would have been so much nicer, easier, to have you here and discuss all these instances. I trust you won't think me a horrid pedantic person,—a conceited scribbler. You must give me credit for the best intention and accept my remarks in a spirit of affectionate *camaraderie,* in which they are offered.

To John Galsworthy

Capel House.
8 Sept., '10.

MY DEAREST JACK,

I am really grieved at X—— worrying you with this fatuous business. Gordon Bennett made a long stay in Ceylon late last year and Hugh Clifford (Col[onial] Sec[retar]y) fired into him the whole, I be-

lieve, of my prose. He must have in addition preached not a little to that American citizen,—but of that he does not boast. I shall at a fitting opportunity explain the matter to him. He, good fellow, has been patting himself on the back ever since he heard of the offer from the N. Y. *Herald*. If *Under Western Eyes* had not been flung away, those people would have taken it. To make use of *Chance* for this opportunity is now impossible.[1] I wouldn't risk it. I have dismissed all thought of it out of my head.

I feel awfully tired to-night, my dear Jack, and there's but little to show for it. It has been a bad day.

Our dear love to you both.

To John Galsworthy

Capel House,
27 Oct., 1910.

DEAREST JACK,

I've been very anyhow; strange fits of giddiness in the morning and absolutely unable to write even a letter. Better now.

Nothing done to *Chance*. Started a story in despair, but it is too bad for anything and I don't think I'll let it go out. I fact I am certain I won't. Neither have I been reading anything. It was an awful time which, I hope, is coming to an end. I haven't caught hold yet but I begin to feel as if I might in a day or two.

This is my news,—very much as usual, as you see. We were so glad to hear that Ada is free from rheumatism this autumn. I was wondering. I hope it's for good, but a mere respite is worth something. Ted [2] was here for a day, likewise Mrs. Ted. He told me that he saw you in Harrow. He expects a visit from you in East Africa. You know it's a beastly rheumaticky place, and, strangely enough, worst in the *dry* season. He told me several anecdotes. Mrs. Ted writes descriptive sketches. Not being able to write myself just now, I've been in a devil of a temper and looking at everything written with a jaundiced eye.

I perceive you have been moving briskly about this distracted realm; but as it was in the interests of Justice, I won't lecture you on these new gad-about habits. Nothing however will excuse motor-car collisions. It's all very well to say that a miss is as good as a mile, but it's a nerve-shaking experience. Did Ada feel it at all afterwards? Some years ago we had an accident of the sort, in a modest way. We ran merely into a baker's cart on a slant and took it backwards into

[1] *Chance* did appear after all in the New York *Herald*.
[2] Mr. E. L. Sanderson.

the hedge. The road was covered with bread. After the first scare it was rather funny (the baker's man was a stutterer), but I couldn't sleep for three nights afterwards.

What are the immediate prospects of the "Eldest Son?" Are there any? I've been tracking down the theatrical column of the *D[ai]ly Tel[egraph]* without coming upon a sign. Why? The news of the dream play[1] is a surprise. Can't I be given a sight of it? I am very, very curious.

I was thinking that your novel must be nearly finished: I had no idea that you were so far as on the final revision. What is the title? I have an idea, dear Jack, that any comment on your work can be nothing by now but (in the words of the Pole in the *Lear of the Steppes*) "perfectly superfluous chatter." I wouldn't chatter,—you know. This is as far as I may venture to hint, since I haven't lately sent you any of my work to see. But in truth it wasn't worth looking at, being neither particularly amusing nor in any way inspiring. All my notions of arrrt! have fallen off me like a worn-out robe. Improving, instructing I cannot be: rebellious I never was. Scandalous, I daren't. Improper? that's no longer fashionable: moreover, I am afraid of Mudie. The Williamsons have already written all the motoring novels. Aviation is a too lofty subject.

Life is very difficult.

Jessie apart, I feel painfully out of touch with men and things. I mean mentally, of course. Otherwise, I may say I have been rather invaded. The other day A. Harrison[2] came along in a Spyker 30–40 car with Frank Harris (once owner of the *Saturday*). They patronized me immensely. It was funny but not very amusing. Harrison objected to the title of my novel; but he was so solemn about it that the rare visitor pity entered my heart and I let him be. I said: Have you considered the gravity of such a step as changing the title? Don't you know that I intend the book to be printed from the text as established in the *Review?* He surrendered gravely, then, with a sort of deference at which I felt remorseful, because,—you know,—because I didn't care whether he printed the novel forwards or backwards with a title or without. He meditated a long time, then gently, not to give me too much of a shock, he said: "I am afraid that novel won't be very popular." And we nodded at each other with immense seriousness.

Dear old Miss Capes is here. She's over sixty and hopes to meet you once at least before she dies. Jessie has been practically unable to walk for a week. A doctor is coming on Sunday. Well, enough of this "superfluous chatter."

[1] John Galsworthy's play entitled "The Little Dream."
[2] Austin Harrison.

To John Galsworthy

Capel House.
1st Nov., 1910.

DEAREST JACK,

I send back the "Windlestraw" by return of post. In this sort of apologue you are simply incomparable. I revel in your grave, earnest shyness going deeper and deeper, leaving no nook unexplored and always managing somehow to achieve some bit of fine and beautiful expression. The direct, almost naïve, preciseness of meditation fits a mind capable of taking a serious departure from a newspaper par. Through that trait your "certain writer" is a perfect creation. His Truth-Conscience is as fair a shape as one ever need wish for a dream-vision. But why it should be scared away so swiftly by the most fatuous thing on earth,—a journalistic phrase,—I don't know, tho' I feel that it must have been so. For one cannot gainsay the force of a public utterance.

That *chose introuvable* the public finds out in many shapes. We can't find it and we can't avoid it.

Almost with everything you write, I feel like that pool which the Angel came down to stir. I become troubled. I have no healing qualities,—in fact I am of no use in this world,—but not being yet quite stagnant water, I feel moved to talk back to the Angel.

As an exposure of that contemptible mode of thinking, which for want of better invention I must call "newspaper cant," nothing could be better, nothing more effective: but with you, both the mastery of your process and your almost passionate impartiality prevent you from stopping short where the commoner sort of honesty would think it had done enough. To leave our brother, for the sake of perfectly impartial irony, at the mercy of every wind that blows, is to expose him to an unworthy world only too ready to pour its scorn and its compassion on the head of "that kind of person."

A public is not to be found in a class, caste, clique or type. The public is (or are?) individuals. *Le public introuvable* is only *introuvable* simply because it is all humanity. And no artist can give it what it wants because humanity doesn't know what it wants. But it will swallow everything. It will swallow Hall Caine and John Galsworthy, Victor Hugo and Martin Tupper. It is an ostrich, a clown, a giant, a bottomless sack. It is sublime. It has apparently no eyes and no entrails, like a slug, and yet it can weep and suffer. It has swallowed Christianity, Buddhism, Mahomedanism and the Gospel of Mrs. Eddy. And it is per-

fectly capable, from the height of its secular stability, of looking down upon the artist as a mere windlestraw!

As to your "certain writer" feeling of elation,—I don't know. Perhaps. Perhaps an uplifting puff of inspiration may be a fine thing whichever way it drives. But we know what becomes of straws blown by the winds: they settle in dark corners and find their end there in obscurity and decay.

Our dear love to Ada and you.

To John Galsworthy

Capel House.
Tuesday, [Nov., 1910.]

DEAREST JACK,

No, I was not taken in. Yes, I thought it might be dangerous: and I wrote with the earnestness befitting the occasion. But I must confess that I was not "wholly serious" (like Mrs. Humphry Ward in her novels) when I compared the public to an ostrich, and an empty-sack, and called it sublime.

I am willing to trust without reserve the judgment of your Manchester readers. The public! We can't get away from it. And in this connection, judging from the ecstatic convulsions of the d[ai]ly papers, the "Quaker Girl" is what the public wants just now.

No. Not a single word more (or other) is wanted in your paper. The thing is perfect as it stands, even the last two lines. Your postscript opens a larger question,—a very large question. It touches upon the very essence of *all* your writing,—or I should say the essential principle guiding your art. There is material for much talk there: admitting naturally (it couldn't be otherwise with you) that the malice is honest (and warranted) and that mystery is a sort of emotional pickle and preservative of the highest things, being,—as you say,—divine.

I am however a little in doubt of your *precise* meaning. Not much in doubt but just a little. It seems to me at times as though I had, to some small extent, lost intellectual touch with you. Why it should be so, unless from the general weakening of my grasp over things, of which (rightly or wrongly) I have a dismal consciousness, I don't know. Perhaps it is only that, of late, we have been physically apart for long stretches of time? There is something in personal contact which clarifies the mists of preconceived ideas each of us carries about him like a sort of private atmosphere. It is quite possible that I have never understood you thoroughly—*à fond,* as the French say—or at least as much as it is possible to understand. If so I must have appeared to you more

than once as insufferably and even perversely dense. Give my love to Ada. The other day I took up *Yvette*.[1] How well she has done it all.

To E. L. Sanderson

Capel House.
17th Nov., 1910.

DEAR OLD TED,

Prodigious! Prodigious! The shade of the old Frenchman who had said that it is only the unexpected that happens must be rubbing his hands in the Elysian Fields and nudging the other shades to call their attention to Elstree, here below, where its wisdom is justified. But I am not sure that an action for mental and emotional damages would not lie against you people. The amount of thought and sympathy expended in this house on Helen and you during the stormy 13th inst.—on the assumption that you were then off the Spanish Coast—is positively ruinous. We felt awfully "sold" when your letters arrived.

Seriously, dear Ted! I rejoice exceedingly at you taking up this work, for which your hardly acquired experience of men and things makes you even more fit than you were before. I don't forget the material improvement which has its great importance: but my most affectionate wishes do go to the guardian of the best sort of learning and of the best traditions, taking up the care of young minds in this troubled time of disappearing landmarks.

May all blessings attend you both on this new ground of daily toil. Wherein, I know, you will both set up yourselves the mark of a high ideal. After you are settled a bit, I shall be anxious to visit you. It will be like old times to enter again that house with the friendship which has first led me into it now ready to welcome my (somewhat tottering) footsteps.

No more at present.

Love to Helen and the kiddies from us both.

To Sir Hugh Clifford

Capel House.
22 Dec., 1910.

MY DEAR CLIFFORD,

We are so much not *du monde* that never looking at the social columns of our noble press we have remained in ignorance of the happy event

[1] The translation by Mrs. John Galsworthy of a selection of Guy de Maupassant's tales.

till a friend came along and enlightened us. Pray receive our belated felicitations, none the less hearty for the delay. We are made happy by your happiness; and Jessie applauds both your wisdom and your good fortune. May a long succession of unclouded years be your lot.

For my part I feel constrained to remonstrate a bit. The appeal to my literary opinion was not scrupulously fair. Suppose I had been in one of my cantankerous hours when the book came?[1] But I daresay you were confident. And with reason. No native or acquired cantankerousness could resist the charm of style, the delicate simplicity of expression, the obvious (and so rare!) "good faith" of the writer, exercising her insight not for the sake of cleverness but in the service of a true feeling for the human beings with whom she deals. These are rare qualities.

I would have written but I kept on thinking—he's coming soon. You know you had promised to come in the autumn. Then I thought—he's writing. And with the book—the great book—in my mind I thought I had better keep quiet till I heard from you. I myself had to write a quantity of dismal rubbish—and so the days went slipping by.

We send you our warmest Xmas wishes.

To Joseph de Smet[2]

Capel House.
23rd Jan., 1911.

DEAR SIR,

It is perfectly correct. I was nineteen before I learned English. I went to sea rather late at the age of seventeen, but I was for two years in the Mediterranean.[3] I joined my first English ship in March, 1878, I think. Anyway as we went up the Bosphorus we saw the tents of the Russian army at San Stephano. That was the year. In May of the same year I landed in Lowestoft (on the East Coast), knowing no one in England. My first English reading was the *Standard* newspaper, and my first acquaintance by the ear with it was in the speech of fishermen, shipwrights and sailors of the East Coast. But in 1880 I had mastered the language sufficiently to pass the first examination for

[1] Sir Hugh Clifford had given J. C. a copy of *Peter's Mother,* by Mrs. Henry de la Pasture (Lady Clifford) during an earlier visit in May, 1910, and asked him for his opinion.

[2] A Belgian man of letters who wrote the first essay in French on the works of Joseph Conrad in 1911.

[3] Joseph Conrad was really almost twenty before he learned English; and he was for more than three years in the Mediterranean.

officer in the Merchant Service, including a viva-voce of more than two hours. But "mastered" is not the right word; I should have said "acquired." I've never opened an English grammar in my life. My pronunciation is rather defective to this day. Having unluckily no ear, my accentuation is uncertain, especially when in the course of a conversation I become self-conscious. In writing I wrestle painfully with that language which I feel I do not possess but which possesses me,—alas!

Thanks for your friendly letter. Pardon the delay in answering it, but I am trying to finish a longish story and I have been so tired at the end of the day that the pen once thrown down I had not the courage to pick it up again for correspondence. There is a pile of letters to answer lying before me now.

Pray rest assured of my deep sense of your sympathetic appreciation and believe me cordially yours.

To Arthur Symons

Capel House.
7th Feb., 1911.

MY DEAR SYMONS,

I understand you are all alone for a few days so I drop you this note *en camarade* for company's sake, tho' indeed I have nothing memorable and nothing new to say. I wish I could invent something amusing, but I feel too stupid just now to try. Moreover, to be amusing is not in my line. That's why the public fights shy of my writing I suppose.

I was glad to see you more alert, more hopeful and altogether better this time. I expect many fine things from you in the future. My days of fine things are done I fear; still one must go on. At any rate I must.

Miss Tobin's [1] passage under our roof left a delightful scent of intelligence and charm of a fine humane quality. You are lucky in your friends, *mon cher*. Pray remember us to her in as friendly terms as you can think of.

It's late. I am tired after a day of uphill toil. Now it is always uphill with me. And the worst is that one doesn't seem any nearer the top when the day is done.

[1] An American friend, Miss Agnes Tobin.

To Arthur Symons

Wednesday Evening [1911].

MY DEAR SYMONS,

I've just finished reading your touching and sympathetic letter.

No, my dear fellow, you have not deserved it; if any one has the right to ask, Why? you have that right. But if you do such things as your translation of *Crimen Amoris* out of despair—then, take my word for it, you need not despair.

One survives everything—disaster—annihilation itself, absurd as it seems to say it. Your *désir de vivre* is the best proof that you deserve to live. And you must not forget that you exist *pour les esprits d'élite,* which is the best sort of existence.

To recommend forgetfulness to a man so profoundly tried as you have been tried, would be folly. Yet, as has been said, life is a dream, or, as I should say, a succession of *songes doux ou terribles.* Well, and if it is so, then even in terror we may find inspiration once we regain courage enough to turn our eyes away from it. Don't look back, for indeed the only way to overcome injustice whether of man or fate is to disregard it.

To John Galsworthy

Capel House.
10th March, 1911.

DEAREST JACK,

Of course it isn't pure æsthetics (only Flaubert's *Salammbô* amongst novels is that) but even on that ground alone you have done a very fine thing.[1] There are passages and pages which have an unalterable beauty. The psychology is masterful, the conduct admirable. You have put insides into these people with a vengeance. Do you remember telling me (it's ten or more years ago) that they had no insides. Aha! You are doing such wonders with them now that I can't resist rubbing in that saying a bit,—in sheer glee at the completeness of your achievement. Every patrician woman of them all is first rate,—the aristocrat, the Pagan, the woman of the world, the housewife. They are exquisite. *The* woman of the story is just what she should be, I think: with her somewhat mysterious attractions and a sort of shadowy beauty. I consider her a great evidence of your artistic sense. She is very touching

[1] John Galsworthy's novel, *The Patrician.*

in her immobility, with the action of the story revolving round her. Very fine in every attitude, in every shade of expression.

And the men too are exquisitely done, including the knightly defender of lost causes. He too is very fine in every attitude, in every word, a touching pendant to the portrait of the woman. They are the only two personages who have some *chiaroscuro* in them. The others are seen as in a mountain atmosphere, in a limpid, coloured, but perfectly dry (too dry?) light. And equable. This peculiarity of light and atmosphere in which the figures stand each with its own definite outline was to be seen first in the *Country House. Fraternity* is a more mellow book —I mean in the action and interaction of its humanity. In the *Patrician,* the effect of this limpid, dry medium on the personages of the story appears intensified, perhaps simply because they all belong to the same family. They seem not so much to act and react upon each other as jostle each other. This is no criticism. It is simply a confession of the impression produced upon me.

As to Miltoun, he stands out from them in a very striking manner, a very consistently sombre figure. You don't give him a single little gleam. He is to my mind more sombre than Bazarow and almost a plebeian, with his temperamental asceticism, his non-conformist conscience and his passion more like that of a priest in love than anything I could compare it to. He is a strange bird to come out of that nest. However, I don't suppose you meant him to be typical. He is a bigger creation than the others, but I should not say a greater. He is alive right enough, but the reader (this reader) somehow feels that he is what he is, because you *will him* to be so. Whereas the others exist as tho' they had come to life on their own.

Upon the whole this novel is not so large as *Fraternity:* it hasn't got the profound intimacy of feeling of the *Man of Property,* and perhaps less suggestiveness than the *Country House.* In technique, in mastery, it is superior to them all. I should like to know what welcome it will get from the world.

There would be a lot more to say if I weren't anxious to catch the post.

Our love to you both.

To John Galsworthy

28th March, 1911.

MY DEAREST JACK,

You are really infinitely good to me. I don't know how to say the things I would like to say to you. My fibre has become so much softened

that I have lost all confidence in the future,—in the next day, as it were. The only thing which remains to me is the certitude of my tenacity. I know I'll stick to it,—but I have no belief in anything ever coming to a good end. I had arranged things in a measure, yet I felt that there was no reserve of force in me to meet the unexpected, which in all human arrangements lurks in the background. Your assistance makes me feel much more easy in my mind.

How the little play will fare on the stage has occupied my thoughts not a little of late. With my ineradicable mistrust of the theatre as destroyer of all suggestiveness, I cannot help wondering whether the involuted (not involved) delicacy of the idea will get over the foot-lights unscathed. But I am avowedly a prejudiced person, and under the fragrant charm of that piece of work, there is more than a hint of your native strength to give it the necessary dynamic quality wherein resides the power of "effect."

I see you are on the way of becoming an object of suspicion to the *Nation,* which is amusing to observe. All that page of criticism is rather dense and the marvel is that, being so dense, it is by no means solid. The truth is that the only foundation on which criticism of your work can be built is *our common humanity,* that and nothing else. I don't see any change in Mr. Galsworthy's attitude. But then I am not looking at him from the standpoint of some political and social theory. However, the fact must not be shirked that in whatever you do, my dear Jack, people will look inside or beyond your art for the idea. And it is on the enunciation of the idea that you'll have to put on stress if you want to guide the judgment of your contemporaries. No more at present. Love to you both.

To John Galsworthy

Capel House.
Sunday, May, 1911.

DEAREST JACK,

Having got a slant of fair wind with *Chance* I let Jessie write to dear Ada of the conclusion arrived at by the surgeon who has taken up her case. It will certainly be a matter of three months in nursing homes in London and in the country, but the game is worth the candle.

But we both have come to the conclusion that it should be put off to end of August. She wants me to get on with *Chance* without worry and with the great help her being at hand to type and retype my copy would be to me. She fears too that Jack, who is absurdly sensitive to heat, would feel the summer in London too much. It would not do him any good I am certain. We don't want him to wilt down from the

flourishing state in which we have managed to keep him. She wants also to give Borys the full month of August, out of his holiday, in the country.

All this seems to me sensible enough: not to speak of her desire (no doubt) to have a summer in the country where she can at least sit out in the open air all day long. And indeed I believe I shall find it easier to work here than in dismal London lodgings. I've written to the surgeon proposing this delay.

Borys is booked to try for a Tonbridge scholarship: the fateful date being June 6th. A couple of years there would not do him any harm. I hope he may get it, but he is too much like me in disposition.

Since last July, my dear Jack, up to date (including the batch of *Chance* now on my table ready for post) I've written as follows 21, 9, 30, 12, thousand words in short stories and just now 12,000 of *Chance* done in the last fortnight. Say 84,000 in 10½ months of time. In that time I have been three weeks in December without writing a line: and now again seven weeks,—the most horrible nightmare of an existence, —from March 5th to April 29 with not a page, not half a page in all that time! How I came out of it with my sanity apparently unimpaired I don't know. When I think that this may happen to me again any day, I feel my courage ooze out of my finger-tips. But there are the words. And if I can keep up, there will be about 30,000 more by end June, say 120,000 in a year of 9½ working months,—the other 2½ months being like the lowest circle of the Inferno and not to be thought of, even, without shudders.

You haven't given me the slightest inkling as to the reception of the little play by the Manchester public. Were you pleased with the interpretation?

To R. B. Cunninghame Graham

Capel House.
2 June, 1911.

TRÈS CHER AMI,

Thanks very much for the books. You are indeed very good to me. Hudson's volume is fine, very fine, infinitely lovable and, as one reads on, one feels one's affection increase at every page. And as mere writing it is remarkably harmonious, nothing too much, the right note of humanity, the right tone of expression, a sort of earnest quietness absolutely fascinating to one's mind in the din of this age of blatant expression. He is a delight,—absolutely individual. It is as if some very fine, very

gentle spirit were whispering to him the sentences he puts down on the paper. A privileged being. Give him my love when you write to him.

"François" is quite good. Very genuine touches all along and quite telling bits here and there. I am grateful to you.

I send you back His Excellency's letter. I wish I could read Spanish so as not to miss the smallest crumbs of your prose, of which I have been enamoured for years with a passion I imagine to be inextinguishable, since your pages give me the same emotion as years ago, haunt my mind with the same persistence, bring in their train the same delight.

Well, no more just now. I've been writing late last night and feel slack and stupid this morning.[1]

To E. L. Sanderson

Capel House.
Wednesday, 7 June, 1911.

DEAREST TED,

Thanks for your letter, which has touched us both immensely. Henceforth we look upon Jack as an Elstree boy. You are very good to us.

Last Monday I saw Mrs. Ridgeway and we had a long and delightful talk,—rejoicing together on you being in England in your delightful place and making a success from the very beginning.

My congratulations on the effective use of your influence in high places. You did do a fine stroke of work for these young men. May every endeavour of yours be blessed and every task lightened!

I must tell you that before long you shall see it gazetted that Joseph Conrad has been granted a pension of £100 on the Civil List *for his services to Literature*. Wonders shall never cease. Jack[2] started the agitation of course and apparently there was no difficulty. One accepts such recognition with mixed feelings. It is in a sense a confession of failure,—but I prefer to look at it from its other and honourable side. At the same time I feel a little ashamed. There are so many deserving men who ought to have pensions and haven't got them!

I am just now in a tolerably effective writing vein, and therefore am sitting tight over the grindstone. Must! Or else I would take a day off to run over to Elstree. A very clever surgeon has been to see Jessie, and lifted the load of our heart by declaring that the limb can be made serviceable by a long course of treatment. No operation or only a very

[1] J. C. was then working at *Chance*.
[2] John Galsworthy.

slight one. It is arranged that we shall come to town in early September for Jessie to go into a nursing home. It may be a matter of three months perhaps.

No more for the present. Our dear love to all your home.

Yours affectionately and gratefully.

To Sir Hugh Clifford

Capel House.
Coronation Day.
1911. [June 22.]

MY DEAR CLIFFORD,

It would be too long to tell you of the usual botherations to which my life seems condemned. The first three months of this year now look to me like the confused recollections of a nightmare—what with the usual (but not very severe) illness—then being chucked out of the house on account of some beastly complications with the drains. We fled to Dymchurch, where fate treated me to something which looked and felt like a cold, but of such devilish virulence (and I've never had a "cold" in my life before) that I remained mentally prostrated for weeks. And all the time I was involved in one of my 40,000-word "short stories"—which I was unable to throw off my chest. And over it all like a black-winged phantom there was hovering the necessity, the urgent necessity, to begin the novel for the New York *Herald*.[1] A contract which I owe to your friendship,[2] and much too good to let slip through my fingers.

I had to lay aside this letter. Coronation Day is now in the past. But I won't take a fresh piece of paper to put the date right. What I set out to say was that all these delays, vexing as they were, gave me the time to read the *Downfall of the Gods* three times from end to end. As to pages and passages read and re-read and meditated over I can't give you that tale of them even approximately.

What a tremendous subject for a great, a really great Opera! And pray don't think it mean praise. No great poem for music has been written yet; subjects of course are lying about. What I mean to say is that here is a subject, the subject of *the* Great Oriental Opera, worked out. Absolutely done! The simplicity of the highly dramatic action, the pic-

[1] *Chance.*

[2] Some of Conrad's books had been lent by Sir Hugh Clifford to Gordon Bennett to read on his yacht during the voyage from Colombo to Bombay in the spring of 1910, and he had at once cabled to New York to "buy a Conrad" for the *Herald.*

turesquely imposing background, the irresistible blind movements of the crowds and the tragic fatality of the *"passion charnelle"*—all is there to inspire some musician of the future, great enough to express the very spirit of the East in the music of the West. I never thought that the day would come on which I would wish I had been born a great composer. Then indeed we would have collaborated—to be abused of course by every yapping musical critic on the press, but with the certitude of leaving behind us a magnificent achievement. The above you may take as the first impression—of no mean force, I can assure you. Then came the other readings—deeper impressions.

Sat, the artist, is a great *trouvaille*. The girl is amazing, the high priest quite convincingly alive, and the suggestion of the oppressed, toiling, sweating humanity, both in its subjection and in its revolt, admirable. It lives, it moves, it has its artistic being—it is undeniable. Chun himself is the least distinct; but that perhaps was unavoidable, unless—and here comes the general criticism: the book seems to me too short for the greatness of the conception. Chun should have been more developed. And if you ask me how? I must answer that I don't know how. I have not the critical knack. It's a feeling—an instinct, if you like. Chun is weak—not absolutely, of course, but in relation to the strength of all the rest. I admit that all he says and does is right—but there is something wanting. Something that would *impose* him upon our attention. Not a very illuminating criticism—is it? Perhaps it is the girl who extinguishes him. She is truly a creation.

But indeed I am very glad of the book; glad that you have written it. I don't think I've missed anything. It has a great ampleness of conception and many beautiful pages. In those hours I have lived with it. I seemed now and then to see it as an allegory draped in Eastern robes of things much nearer to us here in space and time than that gorgeous legendary story of ancient wrongs and ancient revolt, something of the fatality which broods over all popular upheavals.

This is not the tenth part of what I could find to say if I were not growing stupid—or tongue-tied, or something. There are weeks, whole weeks, when I am utterly unable to write a single sentence. I struggle with my thoughts like a man stricken dumb suddenly. But enough of that. I congratulate you. And when I think that it was thrown off as a holiday task—well!

Keep always for us a corner in your thoughts and may all the gods of East and West be propitious to you.

To Edward Garnett

August 4, 1911.

MY DEAR EDWARD,

I have expressed to Pinker my view of his sending to you a story[1] rejected already by the *Century*. It was not fair either to you or me. As to faking a "sunny" ending to my story, I would see all the American Magazines and all the American Editors damned in heaps before lifting my pen for that task. I have never been particularly anxious to rub shoulders with the piffle they print with touching consistency from year's end to year's end.

The story itself, I suppose, is not "done," since it has failed to convince you. It is the story of the *Costa Rica,* which was not more than five years old when I was in Singapore. The man's name was Sutton. He died in just that way—but I don't think he died of Slav temperament. He was just about to go home to marry a girl (of whom he used to talk to everybody and anybody) and bring her out there, when his ship was run on a reef by the commander of a Dutch gunboat whom he had managed to offend in some way. He haunted the beach in Macassar for months and lies buried in the fort there.

Only 18 months ago Charles Marris, Master and owner of the *Araby Maid* island-trader, came to see me in Aldington. He was in England to see his people who farm in Somersetshire. He said to me: "We are all reading your books out there." We had a long talk about men and things of the Archipelago. He said: "You ought to write the story of the *Costa Rica.* There's a good many of us left yet who remember Sutton." And I said I would, before long.

That's how "Freya" came to be written. But of course facts are nothing unless they are made credible—and it is there that I have failed.

To John Galsworthy

Capel House,
Friday, 11 A. M., [Aug., 1911.]

DEAREST JACK,

Providence is looking after me with a vengeance. Last Saturday, Norman Douglas (who had returned to London from Italy 5 days before) came for a week-end. But he arrived in a state of high fever and hardly able to stand. We put him to bed and sent for a doctor. On Monday we sent for a nurse (after Jessie and I had been up with him for two nights and a day). To-day he does not recognize anybody, his tempera-

[1] "Freya of the Seven Isles." (In *'Twixt Land and Sea.*)

ture after most appalling ups and downs has reached 105°,—and here we are.

His "oldest friend" (a solicitor in London) and his brother in Scotland return evasive answers to my letters and telegrams. They say they are "shocked." And the "friend" has bolted off somewhere North for his holiday without sending me his address. He is "very sorry."

All we know for certain of D.'s illness is that it is not typhoid. At first we thought it was a heat-stroke. Now we doubt it. The doctor says,—how can I tell? There are no other symptoms but fever. And suppose it is brain-fever? He can't be moved and indeed where could one move him? One can hear him moaning and muttering all over the house. We keep Jack outside all day,—or as much as we can. Borys begins to look hollow-eyed,—his room is just across the passage,—six feet from the sick man's door, which is kept open for air. I've never seen Jessie look so strained. She knows what it means for all of us. Last week I haven't written a line. My head swims,—and in truth I am as near distraction as is consistent with sanity.

Should he die, I shall have to bury him I suppose. But even if he recovers (which we still hope for), it will be a matter of weeks. All my work, all our plans and our little pitiful hopes, seem knocked on the head. I have seen and tended white men dying in the Congo [1] but I have never felt so abominably helpless as in this case. As Jessie said last night, —this is like a nightmare.

Well, I felt I must tell you. For the rest I've sold the MS. of *Outcast* to an American collector for £30.[2] This will come extremely handy now, or else I wouldn't have sold it for the price. In pursuance of your suggestion I have made inquiries as to the *Worcester* [3] in the Education Dept. A man called Hornell,—a friend of Lady Ritchie. He assured me it was a very good school generally and a good preparation for any technical course in the future.

I think this is all,—rather catastrophic, isn't it?

Love to you both.

To John Galsworthy

Capel House,
23 Sept., 1911.

MY DEAREST JACK,

Yesterday at 5.30 I went on shore leaving Borys looking after me from the gangway grating of the *Worcester*. . . .

[1] Allusion to Klein (Kurtz): See "Heart of Darkness."
[2] The late John Quinn.
[3] The nautical school-ship in the Thames.

I spent an hour and a half on board. I was struck very favourably by the appearance of the boys both as to their physique and their faces. I must have looked at a hundred of them at least out of the full complement of 158. The instructors are all naval petty-officers. There are seven masters. I had a long talk with the headmaster and liked him very well. He came up on deck with me and was very nice to the boy. Mr. May, the chief officer, promised me to put him through his course of drill and seamanship instruction exactly as if there were nothing the matter with his eyes. Of course he can't expect now to get any of the many prizes given by various companies. Were he ever so proficient, it would not be fair to the other boys: but that does not trouble me as long as he gets a first-class leaving certificate at the end of two or 2½ years.

Poor Mons. B. looked to me a very small and lonely figure on that enormous deck, in that big crowd, where he didn't know a single soul. It is an immense change for him. Yes. He did look a small boy. Couldn't make up my mind to leave him and at last I made rather a bolt of it. I can't get him out of my eyes. However, there are over twenty new boys and all their hammocks are slung together aft on the port side of the lower deck, so he shall have some companions in the first few days of misery. I went ashore in the 14-oared second cutter and I have never seen a nicer boat's crew. Having more than an hour to wait in Maidstone I wrote a letter to Borys, which I am certain must have comforted him to receive this morning. To-day putting away some things in his room, I discovered carefully preserved all the postcards dear Ada used to send him when he was ill with scarlet fever six years ago or more in London. It would be kind, it would be very dear of both or either of you to drop him a few words in the course of the next week or so: Cadet A. B. Conrad, H. M. S. *Worcester,* Grenhithe, Kent.

I haven't been very bright these last 2 months. I don't think I have written more than 10 thousand words in all that time. This is very bad. I hope to make a start soon, for the time is running out. The novel is advertised for the 5th Oct.[1] and the *Reminiscences* will come out a fortnight later. Our dear love to you both.

To John Galsworthy

Capel House,
15 Oct., 1911, 11 P.M.

MY DEAREST JACK,

Yes. There is no arguing against what you say. One could attempt to explain certain things but it would be an unprofitable occupation.

[1] *Under Western Eyes.*

You know there are about 30,000 words more than the printed text. Revising while ill in bed, I am afraid I have struck out whole pages recklessly.[1] The other day I looked at the MS.—1357 pp. averaging about 120 words per page. There are passages which should have remained. I wasn't in a fit state to judge them. Well, it's done now, and let the critics make what they can of it. I have ordered no press-cuttings, not because I am afraid of them, but that I am really indifferent to what may be said,—or left unsaid. However, Marwood[2] sent me the review out of the *Morning Post,* which he takes in. It was all right: but there was a passage in it which is incomprehensible, unless meant as a hint that I, being a Jew, am especially fit to hold the balance between East and West! I believe that some time ago that preposterous C—— has been connecting me with Father Abraham, whether to hurt me or to serve me, or simply because he's an idiot,—I don't know. Anyhow I heard it from somebody a year or more ago. It's an absurd position to be in, for I trust I have no contemptible prejudices against any kind of human beings and yet it isn't pleasant to be taken out of one's own skin, as it were, by an irresponsible chatterer. I wrote a friendly note to the critic, giving him my surmise as to the passage in question and begging him, should he hear any statement of the kind, to contradict it positively.[3]

I have been revising the *Reminiscences* book. I don't know when it will appear.[4] I think that the evil spell is broken at last. I've just written 500 words of *Chance* in a couple of hours. It's about time. Over two months, indeed nearly three, without (practically) a line!

Well, *Bonsoir,* dear Jack. Our dear love to you both.

To Joseph de Smet

30 November, 1911.

DEAR SIR,

You have succeeded admirably with the *Typhoon*[5]—the most difficult piece of my work to render into French, with perhaps the exception

[1] All this passage deals with *Under Western Eyes.*

[2] An intimate friend who used to come and see Joseph Conrad every week. He was one of the men of whose critical judgment Conrad had a very high opinion.

[3] See the letter written by Joseph Conrad and published in the *New Republic* (U. S. A.), on August 4, 1918, under the title, "Mr. Conrad Is Not a Jew."

[4] *Some Reminiscences,* which had appeared serially in the *English Review* from December, 1908, to June, 1909, was published in book form at the beginning of the next year, 1912.

[5] This French translation of *Typhoon* was published serially in a magazine called *Progrès:* later another translation by André Gide was published in book form (*Nouvelle Revue Française,* pub.)

of the *Nigger*. I repeat it's done admirably, and I beg you to believe in my gratitude for all the toil and trouble you have undertaken.

The few suggestions I have made, you will see, are of a trifling nature, but I wished to show you that I took an earnest interest in your work.

You will find *Nostromo* infinitely easier to translate. Of that I am certain. I shall prune that novel of all redundant phrases as much as I can.

Your book about Hearn [1] delighted me greatly by its appreciative tone and its sympathetic view of that remarkably fine nature. It is in every way worthy of its subject and I beg to congratulate you on your achievement. Many thanks for the copy, which I shall prize greatly.

To Arthur Symons

Capel House,
11 Dec., 1911.

MY DEAR SYMONS,

You must think me an unspeakable brute. Well, I can only hang my head and trust in your charity. The letter you wrote me about the novel is the only real satisfaction I got from my work, my desperate work at it.[2] It's impossible to thank you adequately. You haven't missed a single point, I verily believe, not a single phrase. But readers like you are the only ones for whom it is worth while to write.

I have been continually seedy all Nov. up to last week. I am feeling a little better now. Your letter has saddened me. I understand perfectly how you feel. But what can one say? Words are poor comfort. Of one thing you may be certain and that is of my comprehension and sympathy. For the rest I can only say to you what I am saying to myself: *Courage—Courage—quand même.*

I am trying to finish a beastly novel which ought to have been done with last October.[3] I am sick of the pen.

To Arthur Symons

Capel House
25 Jan., 1912.

DEAR SYMONS,

You can write as admirably in French as in English. And another thing eminently true is that you are eminently worth writing for. For

[1] *Lafcadio Hearn: L'Homme et l'Œuvre.* (Paris, *Mercure de France,* 1911.)
[2] This reference is to *Under Western Eyes.*
[3] *Chance.*

you understand one admirably and grudge no words of honour and reward. A very prince of readers!

I wish, *mon très cher et généreux ami,* that I were more worthy. But it is the privilege of princes (worthy of the name) to be profuse and lavish in their gifts. And I, surely, am not the man to turn my back on the jewels of your praise. If I don't deserve it all, I am yet conscious that all my life I have tried! tried! tried!

To John Galsworthy

Capel House
[End of March, 1912.]

MY DEAREST JACK,

Your letter came from a most unexpected "location." The great F. M. H.[1] who was here shortly after New Year with the somewhat less great V[iolet] H[unt] told me you had gone with a break-down to the Riviera. I didn't believe in the break-down, for I thought that a word from Ada would have given us the bad news. But I did believe you wanted to be quiet a little, after the strain of putting the *Pigeon* through. So I kept quiet too, writing MS. for dear life and in a sort of panic as the N. Y. H.[2] began to print on the 15 Jany.—of which I heard in a roundabout way from Paris: Pinker having kept the fact from me in order to spare my feelings.

And then we all had influenza! Jessie bad, complicated with quinzy. Jack slight, mere sore throat,—and Borys in the distance sympathetically had to go into the sick-bay with a temperature at the very time. There was no dear kind Mrs. House to look after him but a gruff old attendant. Still the boy had a week of it. I never went to bed, but was very seedy indeed for a few days. I kept the fact from Pinker to spare his feelings.

I finished *Chance* on the 25th at 3 A. M. and went to bed done up. On waking up at nine your letter was handed to me. Thank you, my dear fellow. I drew from Pinker more than he expected I would on that book,—140,000 words it is.

We met on the 25th, I having asked him to lunch with me. I went then to Harrison to try and persuade him to take *Chance* for the *English Review*. However, that matter remains undecided for a few days. I don't think he will do it. Still, that book will bring £700. And there shall be a vol. of short stories, say £200 more to come this year. Not so bad, considering that I went straight from my bed to the desk only last

[1] Mr. Ford Madox Hueffer.

[2] The New York *Herald*. The publication of *Chance* began on the 21st of January, 1912.

June twelve months. There are more than 200,000 words written, an average of 10,000 words per month, of which a good four were lost for various reasons,—mostly health.

When you get back to Wingstone I should like to come and see you, if I am fit. For if I am distracted with inability to write I am not fit for human society. And indeed I see no one, I may say.

I won't say anything of the *Pigeon*,—except that it reads admirably and that I have been fascinated by the presentation of the theme and the handling of the personages. But it is a very deadly playfulness. I don't make this remark in a disparaging spirit, I assure you. It went home with me quite. Very fine.

We are so glad to hear Ada is better. Does she mean to rush with you all over "God's own country"?

The only remarkable thing that happened in Europe was one of the miners' delegates saying to the tearful Asquith with a sort of ferocious jocularity: "*We* are the Government." *Très chic*—the walls of St. Stephen must have trembled. And it is eminently proper that the underground forces should shake the earth.

To-morrow I begin another novel. I can't strike. Our dear love.

To Frederick Watson[1]

Capel House.
24 May, '12.

DEAR SIR,

I doubt whether I am qualified, but even if I had no doubts I would hesitate to venture on what, in view of the whole body of my work, must of necessity be a side-show. Moreover inventing adventures would not amuse me. I am afraid it would worry me rather. I am not a facile inventor. I have some imagination,—but that's another thing. I am satisfied with my public, which understands sufficiently the general intention of my work. Why look for another?

Besides,—to be quite frank,—I begin to feel that my working hours are running out. I have some three books in my head. I am going presently to begin a novel, the scene of which will be the Mediterranean about 100 years ago.[2] And then there are a few articles, some more Reminiscences, to do. I won't say my hands are full, but my mind is,—of projects, which, I am sure, will turn out, when executed, by no means so fine as they appear to me now. But pray believe that I quite appreciate the spirit in which you made the suggestion. Coming from you I take it as a compliment.

[1] In reply to a letter suggesting that he should write a boy's adventure story.
[2] The novel which was to be *Suspense*.

To Edward Garnett

Capel House,
27 May, '12.

DEAREST EDWARD,

I do hope you are not too disgusted with me for not thanking you for the *Karamazov*[1] before. It was very good of you to remember me; and of course I was extremely interested. But it's an impossible lump of valuable matter. It's terrifically bad and impressive and exasperating. Moreover, I don't know what D[ostoevski] stands for or reveals, but I do know that he is too Russian for me. It sounds to me like some fierce mouthings from prehistoric ages. I understand the Russians have just "discovered" him. I wish them joy.

Of course your wife's translation is wonderful. One almost breaks one's heart merely thinking of it. What courage! What perseverance! What talent of—interpretation, let us say. The word "translation" does not apply to your wife's achievements. But indeed the man's art does not deserve this good fortune. Turgenev (and perhaps Tolstoi) are the only two really worthy of her. Give her please my awestruck and admiring love. One can be nothing less but infinitely grateful to her whatever one may think of or feel about D. himself.[2]

Tell me, when you have a moment to spare, what sort of reception had your Spanish play.[3] I reckon it is due for performance from what you told me. I haven't seen any papers for a week. I am trying to start a long short story and these beastly things put me off completely. I know that there is another strike and that's all. But that sort of thing is growing monotonous, and having no particular respect for either of the *three* parties I am not exciting myself over the game unduly.

To John Galsworthy

Capel House,
28 June, 1912.

MY DEAREST JACK,

Thanks for your letter received yesterday. I am so glad you like the *Titanic* article. It might have been infinitely better tho'. But I had

[1] *The Brothers Karamazov.* Translated from the Russian of Feodor Dostoevski, by Constance Garnett.

[2] See on the same subject letter to Ed. Garnett, May, 1917, p. 192.

[3] "The Spanish Lovers." Adapted from *La Celestina,* by Edward Garnett. Little Theatre, June, 1912.

just 32 hours to do it in, the printing of the *Review* [1] being delayed on purpose.

It's good news about your work. As to mine the news is not good. I have an impression of desperate futility while I am doing it which I cannot shake off. Nothing decent can be written while in that state.

I hope I am not boring you with the boys. But to whom could I write about them if not to you! They are certainly the strongest life-tie I have got.

A vol. of 4 stories will be published by Dent,[2] perhaps in August. Pinker has done very well with them as serials and Dent pays an advance of £200 and a royalty of 25%. The best terms I've ever had for stories.

After finishing *Chance* [3] I did absolutely nothing for ten weeks (except that article). It's awful. But I couldn't. It was maddening.

No more just now. Our dear love.

To Richard Curle

Capel House,
6 Nov., '12.

MY DEAR MR. CURLE,

I need have been an ungrateful churl not to be moved by your article for the *Rhythm*. A mere sympathetic attempt would have been something to be thankful for—but you have very definitely achieved an analysis which (whatever others may think of it) I hold as very valuable, both in matter and tone. A great friend of mine said to me the other day: "This is the first thing worth reading which has been written about you in the way of general appreciation."

Garnett tells me that you would find time to run down here for a day and night. We'll be very glad to see you here, if you don't mind the grind of the journey. I shall drop you a line before very long, suggesting a day. I am not very well now and don't come downstairs, though not actually laid up. Meantime, I thank you heartily for your more than in one way interesting vol. We shall have a talk about it when you come with the *corpus delicti* there before us, to refer to.

Glad you like old Jacobus—the impure Jacobus.[4]

Kind regards.

[1] "Some Reflexions Seamanlike and Otherwise on the Loss of the *Titanic*" had been published in the *English Review*, May, 1912. That article has been included in *Notes on Life and Letters*.

[2] *'Twixt Land and Sea*, a volume of three stories only.

[3] March 25, 1912.

[4] The leading character in "A Smile of Fortune."

To Arnold Bennett

Capel House,
17 Nov., '12.

DEAR MR. BENNETT,

By an extraordinary chance we were away for a day or two when your letter arrived. I am writing to Mr. Retinger asking him to come down here for a day; though his errand seems to me (from what he says) a most hopeless one. Rousing sympathy for landowners must be about the hardest task anyone can set himself to do at the present day.

The concluding words of your welcome letter have warmed my heart, which indeed has never been cold either to yourself or to your work. From that far distant day when (you remember?) you sent me *Leonora,* its great fundamental quality of absolutely genuine expression has been with me an unshakable conviction. I often look through the book, noting on the pages those gifts which have found now their fullest expression.

Believe me most cordially yours.

I am writing hurriedly to catch post. My health has been abominable for years. I trust you won't be shocked if some day I turn up on your doorstep.

To Arnold Bennett[1]

Capel House.
25th Nov., '12.

MY DEAR BENNETT,

You will allow me to drop the Mr. I am covered with confusion at what you say—and were it all as true as your intense sympathy will have it, its value would still be infinitely increased to me by the generosity of your recognition. It is indeed a rare happiness for a craftsman to evoke such a response in a creative temperament so richly gifted and of a sincerity so absolutely above suspicion as all your work proclaims you to be. For myself, in my conscience, all I am aware of is a certain tenacity of purpose which has kept me going through these few years under mental and physical conditions of which I'll say nothing, as they were too intimately adverse to bear description. For the rest, I will only say that if

[1] Arnold Bennett's letter, dated Nov. 22, 1912, to which this one is a reply, will be found in *Twenty Letters to Joseph Conrad* (First Edition Club, London, 1926).

the vintage be good, the merit of the bottle is slender. It just happened to hold it—that's all.

It is difficult to answer a letter like yours, my dear Bennett. I let a day pass to compose myself and I am no nearer an adequate expression of my feelings. I suppose that in such a case there can be no adequate expression. In the rendering of the most genuine emotion there is bound to be some artifice. I have been too profoundly moved to arrange words or even to seek them.

I shall show your letter to my oldest boy when he comes home for his holidays and then I shall deposit it for preservation in the copy of *Nostromo* which, with a few other battered volumes, will be the dearest part of his inheritance. The joy your praise of that novel has given me is immense. With the public it was the blackest possible frost. I was two years at it. It's true that one third of that time was illness; but still it was a long effort.

It's delightful to know you are a man of sails too. I had no idea. But where did you get it that I despised yachting? Who has calumniated me? I have done some (between long voyages) with a friend, in a 12-ton yawl and an 18-ton cutter—long before I wrote a line for print. And some proofs of *Almayer's Folly* were corrected on board the *Ildegonda,* cutter. We ran into Sheerness to pick up the letters. Old times! For racing I certainly don't care at all. That's why I prefer the yawl rig. Yours I suppose is a cutter. Where do you keep her when in commission? I suppose your Essex home will be near the sea. My sincere thanks and *mes hommages les plus respectueux* to Mrs. Bennett. I shall certainly turn up on your doorstep some day next year. Believe me with the greatest appreciation and regard,

Yours gratefully.

To John Galsworthy

Capel House.
Monday, 1913.

DEAREST JACK,

How good of you to write in the rush of your occupations.

I can't tell you what pleasure you have given me by what you say of the "Secret Sharer," [1]—and especially of the swimmer. I haven't seen many notices,—three or four in all: but in one of them he is called a murderous ruffian,—or something of the sort. Who are those fellows who write in the Press? Where do they come from? I was simply knocked over,—for indeed I meant him to be what you have seen at once

[1] The second tale in *'Twixt Land and Sea.*

he was. And as you have seen, I feel altogether comforted and rewarded for the trouble he has given me in the doing of him, for it wasn't an easy task. It was extremely difficult to keep him true to type, first as modified to some extent by the sea life and further as affected by the situation.

As to the girl, Alice,[1] they agree in calling her a "sensual animal,"—goodness knows why. I tried to make her pathetic. Not being very well just now I have been ridiculously irritated by that view.

Some day, my dear Jack, when you have really a free hour, in a month's or in six months' time, just tell me what it is which you think is wrong in the Freya tale.[2] Garnett had attacked it privately some time ago. But I am not satisfied that he is right. I feel all is not well there but on analytical examination I can't discover the fault. Is it the tone? I hardly think so. Or something in the development?

I have crawled down to-day and must be writing. I haven't sent anything to Pinker for three weeks. Directly I have sent off a batch, perhaps next Wednesday, I shall have a day off with the *Inn of Tranquillity*. It wouldn't do to open it now, for I always think and muse over your work and feel disinclined to tackle mine afterwards for hours and hours. You affect me more deeply as the years go by.

To J. B. Pinker

Wednesday, Ap. 6, 1913.

MY DEAR PINKER,

Thanks for the amount placed to my credit at the bank.

I will be sending you some copy this week on Friday.

What do you think of my publisher for U. S. becoming Ambassador?[3] I ought to have a small illumination in all my windows here. But they ought to have appointed the firm: Their Excellencies Doubleday, Page & Co.

Now if only the Powers would make Dent Emperor of Constantinople we would have very splendid connections and walk bathed in glory.

To John Galsworthy

12 Ap., '13.

DEAREST JACK,

You are very good. It shall be as you say and both Jessie and I are very grateful to you for your consent, accepting all the qualification you

[1] A character in the tale "A Smile of Fortune."

[2] "Freya of the Seven Isles," the third tale in the book *'Twixt Land and Sea.*

[3] Walter H. Page.

mention. If I ever thought of Gibbon it was simply because I could see no one else. I shall write to Garnett in that sense.

I think I mentioned to you an American called John Quinn. I have never seen him. But he writes to me letters of 8 or 10 pages. He is what they call there a lawyer,—I imagine a barrister,—and a collector of pictures and MS. I write to him too but never more than two pages. I had a letter from him the very day we lunched together. He urges me to get all my books together on the other side, assuring me that if there was an edition, there would be a demand. Doubleday was talking to me about getting a licence from my other publishers for a uniform set of my books (he has four of them), but he talked vaguely. Still there would be 14 vols. to get out very soon. My great idea is to have something for the boys to finish their education with. If I only had for my share 10/– for every set sold and Doubleday managed to sell 20,000 sets (it does not seem an exaggerated estimate. You should have heard Doubleday talk of 200 or 300 thousand sets of this and that author!) it would be a great thing. You must understand that all this talk was altogether unprovoked. D. asked Pinker to bring me to lunch. There lies my salvation in the future, or any rate of those I'll leave behind me. If you know the young partner in D's firm [1] (of whom Ada and you spoke) well enough to write to him you would perhaps jog his memory about Conrad. It seems that this plan of "taking me up" is his own suggestion because he likes my work. But the thing is to get this plan in motion before my reputation (such as it is) gets stale over there.

For the future there is the Dent contract, 3 novels at £700 each which, with Am. rights, will make nearly £1,000 each, apart from the serial possibilities. But I doubt if I can write one every year. I mean to try,—but just now it seems utterly hopeless.

To J. B. Pinker

Capel House,
Sunday, 2 June, '13.

MY DEAR PINKER,

I had your letter by the mid-day post yesterday. Thanks for the check.

The first chapter of *Chance* was dispatched on Friday evening reg[d] by post. You who know the inner history of that novel will understand why I had more trouble than enough with it. It was written in 1907 and the

[1] Alfred Knopf. He was not a partner, but in the office.

rest of the novel in 1911–12. And it did not belong to that novel—but to some other novel which will never be written now I guess.

I can't tell you how relieved I am to be done with the book. I have been very anxious—but I am so no longer. It's the biggest piece of work I've done since *Lord Jim*.[1] As to what *it is* I am very confident. As to what will happen to it when launched—I am much less confident. And it's a pity. One doesn't do a trick like that twice—and I am not growing younger—alas! It will vanish in the ruck. However, it has served our turn—£1,400 or so—thanks to Hugh Clifford, to whom I intend to dedicate it.

You will send me the two sets of the clean copy—won't you? We must have no circus with this text as we had with *Western Eyes*. I won't keep them a minute longer than absolutely necessary. Say two days.

To Alfred A. Knopf

Capel House,
July 20th, 1913.

DEAR MR. KNOPF,

Mr. Galsworthy has communicated to me your very interesting and friendly letter. I assure you that I am very sensible of the good opinion you have of my work (which dear Hudson also likes) and I congratulate myself on it—since if you had not "happened along," all these books would have remained on the back shelves of the firm where they have been reposing for the last ten years. I see in your letter that you suspect me of undue aloofness. It is not so. I am very much interested; I find it quite exciting to be rediscovered by my own publisher, after such a long time.

I have manifested as much interest in my publishers as my publishers have in me—nothing less; it would be unreasonable to expect more from a man—and I don't know that any angel has yet taken to literature. At any rate, I am not he.

Writing to you as to a good friend of my work, I must begin by saying that in business I am a partisan of frank speech as much as of frank dealing. I am glad to hear that Doubleday, Page & Co. has bought two of my vols. from Mr. Doran. It is a sign of interest. But the fact remains that Mr. Doubleday might have had all my books up to date in his hands if he had cared. Other people bought them and I haven't heard that they have been ruined by it; though I did not give away my work for ten cents a volume, I can assure you. I am not an amateur who plays at it. It's anything but play with me. Perhaps Mr. Doubleday does not know it,

[1] He means after *Nostromo*.

but it's a fact that ever since *Nostromo* (1904) every line of my writing has been serialized in the U. S.—with the exception of the *Mirror of the Sea,* of which however a good part appeared in *Harper's Weekly*. And the *Mirror* is not the sort of stuff to be read in the Elevated train or on the river-ferry while going home. Yet even here the *Pall Mall Mag:* (a popular sixpenny) published several papers out of it, *Blackwood* two or three, and a great penny daily the last two.

Why did these people do these things? Surely not from personal liking. I don't know a single magazine editor here, not even by sight. Of the men on your side, I have seen Col. Harvey once—years ago. Obviously there is something in what I do, some ground to go upon. It is also a fact that ever since *The Nigger* (published by Appleton in 1898 under the absurdly sweet title, *Children of the Sea*) I have had in the U. S. a very good press—invariably. And you cannot deny that the majority of writers of notices in newspapers are men of average tastes. When it comes to popularity I stand much nearer the public mind than Stevenson, who was super-literary, a conscious virtuoso of style; whereas the average mind does not care much for virtuosity. My point of view, which is purely human, my subjects, which are not too specialized as to the class of people or kind of events, my style, which may be clumsy here and there, but is perfectly straightforward and tending towards the colloquial, cannot possibly stand in the way of a large public. As to what I have to say—you know it is never outrageous to mind or feeling. Is it interesting? Well, I have been and am being translated into all the European languages, except Spanish and Italian. They would hardly do that for a bore.

There are two methods in the publishing business. The first is speculative. A book is a venture. Hit or miss. To a certain extent it must be so. But here and there a writer may be taken up as an investment. An investment must be attended to, it must be nursed—if one believes in it. I can't develop much feeling for a publisher who takes me on the "hit or miss" basis. A gamble is not a connection. What position I have attained I owe to no publisher's efforts. Sixteen years of hard work begin to tell.

The question for me is: Has the Doubleday, Page Co. simply bought two books of mine or is it to be a connection? If it is the last, then you will find me responsive enough. I appreciate warmly the practical evidence of your good will towards my work. The writing of this long letter (which is not in my habits) is the best proof of it, for I should not have cared to open my mind like this to an indifferent stranger, I can assure you.

All I can do to help you form a stable connection between me and the firm I am ready to do—even to the sacrifice of my personal tastes. To

begin with I shall at once revise the notes on me and send them to you, I hope by the same ship with this letter. As to the portrait: I shall this week make arrangements with the Cadbys (a couple in great repute as photographers. Very artistic) to have more than one photograph taken in their best manner. The photos will be in your hands in good time before the publication of *Chance*. The Rothenstein portrait we like very much, but something more recent is needed, I think.

For the future: A young literary friend of mine, Mr. Richard Curle, was here some time ago and asked my permission to write a book on me, a critical monograph on my work. Don't think I mean a cheap puff: it would be an interesting attempt to describe my subjects and my methods. Say 50–60 thousand words. It would be exactly what's wanted to educate readers. He knows my work backwards. I may ask him to begin at once and the little book could be ready in some six months. But I can't very well ask him to drop everything and get on with that study unless I may tell him that you will, when the work is ready, consider it in a favourable spirit for publication in the U. S. Of course, I don't suggest you binding yourself in advance. What do you say?

And there is another thing. Last year I published with Harpers' a short volume entitled: *A Personal Record*. A bit of autobiography—and a bit of good writing as well. I let it go to them at a royalty of 10%, because Harpers' have in one way or another paid me a good lot of money in the last five years; thinking also that they would try to do something special with it. But apparently not. They sold a couple of thousand copies, I believe, on the strength of the name, and that's all. This book, rather intimate, quite readable, and for which I care in a special way—is just wasted. Now if you could buy it from Harpers' at once and put it before the public properly in a cheap edition (I am going to arrange for a 2/6 ed. here), say 50c., I believe it would do good. I would suggest extending the title a little, as thus: *A Personal Record, by J. Conrad. The Story of His First Book and of His First Contact with the Sea.* As a matter of fact it is just that. And if people really want that sort of thing they will be able to learn a lot about me from that little book.

Now if Doubleday, Page & Co. can and will do that and use it for the publicity (I don't mean sending men with loaded guns to force it on people, but everything short of that) then for my part I am ready to forego my royalties (under the agreement with Harpers') for three years—*except* in the case of that vol: coming out with others in a uniform edition before the three years expire.

I am ready to embody my proposal in an agreement as soon as you have succeeded in extracting the thing from Harpers', which may not be difficult if attempted at once. I don't think I could do more to show

my interest in the connection with your house, and my appreciation of your efforts on my behalf.

Believe me, my dear Sir, with friendliest feelings.

P. S. I am very busy finishing my next novel—the one I told Mr. Doubleday all about. I hope he wasn't bored to death. Please give him my kind regards. I'll try to send you in time corrected galley slips to set up *Chance* from. I recommend to you that book very specially, for, *of its kind,* it isn't a thing that one does twice in a lifetime!

To Arthur Symons

Saturday.
[Aug. 2, 1913.]

DEAR SYMONS,

Your cheery letter delighted me. I wanted something of the kind. I have been in bed for a week with an abominable attack of gout. I am just able to hop painfully from one room to another. But this stage will soon be over, as the improvement generally is very quick in my case. The worst is that I haven't done any work for a month. No inspiration; a sort of languid feeling all over, and a sensation as if my brain had turned to yeast. Horrid. I must! must!! stick to my desk; but directly I have done some little work I shall try to get to you and hear all your good news.

Jessie sends her friendly regards. She has been very crippled of late and in considerable pain with her knee. Your friend John is seven to-day. Time slips away, *Amigo!*

To Alfred A. Knopf

Capel House,
24 Aug., 1913.

MY DEAR MR. KNOPF,

I have your letter of the 13th inst. for which thanks.

In the matter of Curle's book I certainly did not ask you (meaning the firm) for anything binding. But the idea of the publication in United States by means of English sheets does not commend itself to me. Both Mr. Conrad as subject and Mr. Curle as writer deserve better treatment. I assure you he is not a hack-writer. I am personally very much interested in the book, for reasons of which some are on the surface and for others which lie much deeper. I mean that book to be published in the United States independently of all arrangements in England; and I have good grounds to think that, should you decline it, I can carry the transaction

out elsewhere. You don't seem to realize that a book about Conrad *will* get published anyhow. And I mean Mr. Curle (who out of regard for me has put other work aside) to get a decent royalty and a small advance for his critical volume.

As to the *Personal Record*. I regret to say that my suggestion was not prompted by any specific information. I just threw it out on general principles. Harpers' had it cheap. They haven't made any special effort with it and I concluded that they would let it go if approached diplomatically. I am glad you think on re-reading that there is much to learn about me in it. Truly it is the very heart and essence of Conrad. And if people are only told that sympathetically, they begin to see that it is so.

The *Falk* volume [1] question is interesting to me, but I fear there are no details that I could give you as to the origin of the stories. The volume failed with the public, because it was decapitated. It ought to have had "Typhoon" for first story as published in England. But for some reason you allowed "Typhoon" to go to Putman.[2] I don't shovel together my stories in a haphazard fashion. "Typhoon" belonged to that volume; on artistic and literary grounds; and its absence ruined the chances of the other stories. The reading of that first story attuned the mind for the reception of the others. And the public by neglecting "Falk" and the others recognized obscurely that the volume had its head off—that it was a corpse which, I fear, you will have some difficulty to galvanize into any sort of popularity. There's no harm in trying. But you must be careful not to put people off by forcing on them work of which the quality is not so much on the surface. Later on they will understand me better and recognize the artistic finish of "Falk" and of "Amy Foster"—two of the most highly finished of my stories. Well! No more to-day.

P. S. Yes, I do care very much for *Romance*. I'll give your message to the Galsworthys before long.

To Richard Curle

Capel House.
6 Nov., '13.

MY DEAR CURLE,

Many thanks for the chapter on Women.[3] Frankly it pleases me much and it also pleases my wife,—so you have achieved a feat which is commonly regarded as impossible.

[1] *Falk, Amy Foster, To-Morrow,* three stories, by Joseph Conrad. McClure, Phillips & Co., New York, 1903.

[2] It had been published separately in a volume by G. F. Putnam's Sons (New York and London), in 1902.

[3] "Conrad's Women," a chapter of Richard Curle's book, *Joseph Conrad.*

There is nothing there that I could take exception to even in the innermost of my feelings. Of course not. Your evident sympathy cheers me immensely and your acuteness comes out wonderfully in the simplicity of your style. The "voice" is perfect to my mind. About what it says, you know my feeling. But in one respect, my dear Curle, I beg you most earnestly to follow my advice; and it is this: that all the notes should be incorporated into the text. They will fall into their places admirably, without any trouble. They belong there. It's judgment or comment—part of your developed appreciation. Then why exile them and distract the eye of the reader—and by breaking the flow of the page impoverish the effect of the text? I won't say anything on the appearance of formality it introduces into what is meant to be and indeed is an intimate study meant for the general public.

I keep the Chap. for a day or so more. And I shall send it back to Chelsea.

Affectionate regards from us both.

To Arnold Bennett

Capel House.
29th Jan., '14.

MY DEAR BENNETT,

I have been celebrating the pub^{on}. of *Chance* by an attack of gout; and that's the reason why I have not thanked you before for your good letter—which is more, so much more!—than I deserve.

If you talk like this to Mrs. Bennett, you'll make her dislike me even before I have the honour and pleasure of being made known to her. Only, to be sure, she knows better than anybody else your warm heart and your native generosity which prevent you from measuring your praise with a careful hand.

Yes. You are right, my dear Bennett. One writes for a chosen little group—in my case a bare half-dozen men, of whom for the last fifteen years, you have been one. The public comes in or stays away—and really it does not matter.

Believe me always with great regard and affection,
Yours.

To John Galsworthy

Capel House.
19 March, '14.

MY DEAREST JACK,

I could not write to you before because you never gave me an address

in Egypt: and I did not write to the flat because I felt certain I would hear from you on your return.

We are so glad to hear you are both flourishing. We knew of your Sicilian interlude from your letter to the *Times*.

Chance had a tremendous press. How I would have felt about it ten or eight years ago I can't say. Now I can't even pretend I am elated. If I had *Nostromo, The Nigger, Lord Jim,* in my desk or only in my head, I would feel differently no doubt.

In U. S. the date of publication is 26th March. The only really pleasant news from that side is the announcement that Doubleday, Page have bought the *Nigger* from Putnam and are going to publish it together with *Chance,* under the proper title.[1] That intelligence warmed me a bit.

My dearest Jack, I have been feeling abominably seedy for the last four months. I've only just got out of bed (gout and a nasty sort of cold) this morning. Everybody tells me I am looking well,—but I know how I feel. Something will have to be done. As you know, I went to my desk straight from the bed of sickness and I have been at it ever since. The novel I've been writing for two years now is not finished yet. Another 20,000 words at least must be written. I have just a month to do it in.[2]

Pardon this scrawl, I feel extremely shaky yet. As to coming up I really mustn't risk the slightest exposure to the weather, for a time. I would dearly love to see you and Ada, but I daren't put my nose outside, unless I feel very different from what I feel now.

To Richard Curle

Capel House,
April, 1914. Thursday.

MY DEAR RICHARD,

I snatch this piece of MS. paper after reception of 2 more reviews to share my impression with you. Well, I must say that the book is receiving a magnificent acknowledgment of its existence anyhow.[3] That you are attacked causes me great pain—but there can be in it for you no sense of defeat. I've told you that you would have brickbats thrown at you. You jostle too many people's idols for my sake. But really, with the

[1] The first edition (1897) of *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* in America was published under the title, *The Children of the Sea,* "in deference to American prejudices."

[2] *Victory* was completed on the 29th of May.

[3] *Joseph Conrad,* a volume by Richard Curle.

exception of the *Standard* (a mere impertinence of no authority), the others I am delighted to see all recognize your sincerity, your insight, and every other merit of the book. After the flouts and jeers, which you can't deny you have to a certain extent provoked, there comes always a note of genuine respect for the singleness of purpose, the transparent rectitude of your "pioneer" (as the *Times* points it out) achievement. Of course the small dogs yap the most. They would have yapped at an angel from heaven likewise—and I don't suppose you are much disturbed by that noise. After all, that too is recognition.

As time goes on a reaction is sure to set in, for no amount of envenomed comment can obscure the merit of the work. And the venom too is of very bad quality. It is also the sort of thing that must be discounted, because, don't you see, a book of that sort is bound to provoke that particular kind of attack from every twopenny mind. If I were sure of how you take it my satisfaction would be complete. Drop me a line soon. I am terrifically busy.

Love from all.

To John Galsworthy

Capel House.
5 May, 1914.

MY DEAREST JACK,

I was too seedy and wretched to write when sending you the Am: copy of *Chance*. And ever since I have been far from bright. However, a few days ago I was in London for a day to interview a selection of tutors in order to arrange for coaching B. for a matric. exam.—I intended, of course, to look in at the flat and even hoped to stay on late (for me) and see "The Mob." But I congratulate myself on not having telephoned or wired to you because, in the afternoon, I felt so ill and (I presume) looked so ghastly that Borys rushed me home right away. The tutor question however had been settled by then, and the boy is going to begin on the 10th.

This coach lives in Norwood and seems to understand the business. There will be plenty of work to keep him and Borys busy, for the exams begin 1st July. Six weeks' preparation does not seem much, but the *Worcester* headmaster urged me strongly to let him have a try. His opinion is that he has quite a chance. On the other hand, he pointed out to me that he can't fail badly if he does fail, and the experience will stand him in good stead at the September examination. It will also disclose his weak point to be looked to during the further three weeks' preparation in August.

Borys arrived home very cast down at the thought that his connection with the ship was ended. After he had his supper, we talked soberly far into the night. He told me he supposed the best time of his life was over. His arm, he said, ached with shaking hands with so many. He left the ship in the dinner hour (on special leave five days before the break-up) and it seems that all hands turned up to say good-bye. The boat's crew put him ashore and escorted him up the village street as far as the post-office, which is the boundary. No wonder he looked glum and remarked in a melancholy tone that "one never knew how many friends one had till one was leaving!"

Finally, his parchment arrived to-day and he has the satisfaction of having passed out with a first-class leaving certificate both in school and seamanship. As a matter of fact, he was not anxious, because the chief petty officer wired to him 3 days ago directly the result of the exams was known: but it was kept from me till the very document could be flourished at me triumphantly.

In financial matters Pinker has been very successful. For serial of my next book I get a net £1,000, the bookrights are a certain £850. Of course I've lived nearly two years on it. But there will be something more from *Chance*. Roughly speaking, when the novel is finished (say in a month) Pinker will be paid off and there shall be three or four hundred in hand, with a vol. of short stories ready to publish,—as a stand-by. Tho' I feel frightfully shaken, my head is now above water in a measure.

To Richard Curle

Capel House.
4th July, 1914.

MY DEAR CURLE,

It was indeed delightful to me to have your excellent, soothing, friendly company through what would have been a very trying day otherwise.

But I wonder what those fellows at *Ill. Lond. News* office thought you were?[1] From the severity of your demeanour when in that hole of a place they may have thought that Conrad wanted looking after lest he should get drunk and disgrace himself if allowed to wander about town alone. I noticed they looked at you with a sort of awe and, as it were, concealed curiosity. They were evidently *très intrigués*. Awfully funny. Thanks no end for everything you have done and are doing for me, my dearest fellow.

Love from all here.

[1] Joseph Conrad had paid a visit to the *Illustrated London News* office to correct the proofs of his article on the *Empress of Ireland*.

To Miss M. Harriet M. Capes

Capel House.
22nd July, '14.

MY DEAREST HARRIET,

A thousand apologies for the delay, but I have had my head buzzing and my hands busy with no end of things of no importance which could not wait. I had to go to Sheffield with Borys to stand by him in his matric. exam. I had to finish my novel by a certain date, and then having finished it, I had to sit tight for 10 days revising a monstrous heap of typed copy to catch a particular steamer for America. All this flurry is over now. There only remains the excitement of our journey to Poland, on which we start Sat. next. I'll have there a quiet month or six weeks in the depths of the country and hope to recover my sanity to a certain extent, before we return, in early September.

We leave this house on Sat. 5 o'clock by sea-route to Hamburg and thence through Berlin to the academical town of Cracow, where I was at school just forty years ago. All my tribe is greatly excited, Jessie almost more than the boys. As to myself, I look forward to revisiting the scene with mingled feelings. In that town one September day in the year 1874 I got into the train (Vienna Express) as a man gets into a dream—and here is the dream going on still, only one is conscious that the moment of awakening is drawing close.

With love from us all, I am always your most affectionate friend and servant.

To Mrs. [Lady] Wedgwood

Capel House.
22 July, '14.

DEAR MRS. WEDGWOOD,

I have behaved to you with what my friends call my usual brutality in the matter of correspondence. I throw myself on your mercy. I had a terrible time reducing that mass of typewritten pages which is called *Victory* into some sort of shape for publication. I only got through the horrid task on the eighteenth. Ever since I have been in a state of mental coma. This is the first day of approximate sanity or consciousness. And I use the first moments of recovered reason to present you my apologies and to crave your sympathy,—for what is past.

Amongst the books which I instructed Hachette to send there ought

to have been a volume of Valéry Larbaud, *Journal d'un Milliardaire*,[1] more specially destined for your husband's reading. But you too perhaps will find it interesting, not so much in matter possibly as in manner and also in feeling.

We depart on Saturday,—and the shadow of abandonment lies already on the house. It's very irritating. One finds cupboards unexpectedly locked up; books vanish mysteriously from their accustomed places; the cherished disorder of one's surroundings is thinned down to a sort of barren orderliness. One falls over unexpected trunks. I don't know that I want much to go anywhere, but I wish myself gone,—that's a fact. Borys, who thanks you for remembering him and (in the language of the 17th century) sends his duty to you, is the best off of us all. Under various pretences he gets into the car at daybreak and goes off somewhere, only getting out of it for meals and to go to bed about midnight.

We leave on Saturday and I haven't heard from Richard for days. Mr. Gow has written me a charming letter which I'll answer to-morrow. With my cordial regards to your husband I am, dear Mrs. Wedgwood,

Your very faithful friend and servant.

P. S. Bertrand Russell is coming to-morrow for the day, which is comforting. But I am afraid he will have to eat his lunch with chopsticks, for the forks are disappearing too.

To John Galsworthy

Capel House.
25 July, 1914.

DEAREST JACK,

It's shameful of me not having written before, but (with your knowledge of me) pray judge for yourself. I had a steady month-long pull to finish my new novel. And it was time to finish it too. Twenty months actual working time. I achieved the marvellous feat on the 28th June, and on the 29th started with Borys for Sheffield to stand by him during the ordeal of the entrance examination for the Faculty of Applied Science.

It was at the same time distracting and dull: a trial to the nerves and to one's patience. I had a great pile of typed copy with me, but it was impossible to do anything which would be any good. We got back home

[1] *A. O. Barnabooth, Journal d'un Milliardaire*, by Valéry Larbaud. (Paris, *Nouvelle Revue Française*.)

on the 10th July and only then could I tackle the task to some purpose. An enormous pile,—I tell you! And the subject, the size, say, of a small apple! The title is *Victory;* there seems to be a fashion just now for short titles and apparently I have been unconsciously influenced: for I could not think of anything else. *Victory: An Island Tale.* I took this *Victory* by the scruff of the neck and "wrastled" with it till the eighteenth, on which date I managed to fling it out of the house (into Pinker's arms) and then I collapsed. I don't mean in health,—but mentally. I became vacant and supine like an idiot, and no doubt went about with my mouth open and glazed eyes. Everybody I met exclaimed: "Oh! how well you look!"—I suppose ironically.

The next development is the Polish journey. You may remember being called upon some time ago by a young man of the name of Retinger,—a Pole with a very pretty Polish girl for wife. They have been to see us several times. The mother of Mrs. Retinger has invited all the tribe of us to her house in the country, some 16 miles from Cracow but over the Russian border. This caused such an excitement in the household that, if I had not accepted instantly, I would have been torn to pieces by my own wife and children. So we are going for a month certain, and six weeks possibly. And we are going to-day by the sea-route to Hamburg. Jessie has a fancy to be a little seasick apparently, and in the present inflamed state of feminine minds, I don't think it would be prudent for me to argue the point. And indeed I am too limp to argue or do anything at all. I shall travel like a bale or a millionaire, Retinger having taken upon himself the duties of courier.

I got to London two days ago, and went to the Adelphi at once but was told by a man in a white apron that you were in Devon.

That's where I wanted to go. As to this Polish journey, I depart on it with mixed feelings.

In 1874 I got into a train in Cracow (Vienna Express) on my way to the sea, as a man might get into a dream. And here is the dream going on still. Only now it is peopled mostly by ghosts and the moment of awakening draws near.

We will be back no later than 10th Sept., for Borys's course begins on the 21st. He thinks he has just scraped through. I've my doubts. He had only a month with the coach. The man however assured me that he was quite fit to go up for a try.

I will drop you a line from that distant clime to Devon (where I had much rather be) and I trust it will find you before you start on your summer travels.

Give our dear love to Ada,—with the fullest proportion to yourself.

To John Galsworthy

Grand Hôtel. Cracovie
Galicie (Autriche).
Cracow. 1st August, 1914.

DEAREST JACK,

I don't know when this letter will reach you,—or even if it will reach you: but I must tell you what is happening to us.

This mobilization has caught us here. The trains will run for the civil population for three days more: but with Jessie as crippled as she is and Jack not at all well (temperature) I simply dare not venture on the horrors of a war-exodus. So urged and advised, and after long meditation (24 hours), I have decided to take myself and all the unlucky tribe to Zakopane (in the mountains, about 4 hours [by] rail from here) out of the way of all possible military operations. I had rather be stranded here, where I have friends, than try to get away and be caught perhaps in some small German town in the midst of the armies.

But if the war takes on a European character, I shall be cut off from home for many months perhaps. I have about £70 with me at this moment and have just written Pinker to send me a hundred in banknotes. I wish now I had asked for more. Anyhow the sum won't last for ever, though the war may be a comparatively short one. If England finds itself at war with Austria I entreat you, my dear fellow, to try to open communications with me through the Foreign Office and through such ambassador or envoy of some neutral power who will be charged with the interests of such British subjects as may be left in Austria. It will possibly be the Swiss envoy,—or the Spanish minister. Here the wildest rumours are flying about, but there is no news of any kind. The town is in a state of siege, telegraph and 'phones closed and papers censored. The army magnificent and the mildest behaved.

I have seen not enthusiasm, perhaps, but the greatest desire to be done with a state of suspense which had lasted nearly three years prevails in the population. Yet till two days ago nobody believed in a great war. Now everybody does. Write to me (if possible) to this hotel in the name of Konrad Korzeniowski in accordance with my passport. If, eventually, you have to go to our officials and they are annoyed as to the trouble, I think that the crippled state of wife and illness of child will explain sufficiently why I must remain here. The Austrians won't worry me,—and as to that I can get protection anyhow; but they don't expel people with Polish names, and I'll be out of the way too. Communication could be also opened with me through Count Ladislas Zamoyski, who has a country house near Zakopane.

Our dear love to you and Ada.

Retinger is determined to get back to England, and if he succeeds, he will explain all about my position to you. He asks me to ask you to give him a hearing.

To J. B. Pinker

8 August, 1914.
Villa Konstantynowka
Zakopane. (Galicia).
Austria-Hungary.

MY DEAR PINKER,

I send this under cover of my letter to Mr. Page through the Am. Amb. in Vienna.

Needless to say I haven't yet heard from you through the Cracow man. I don't even know if the letters I have written to you from Cracow (31st July and 1st August) have reached you yet. I asked you in the last to send £100 in notes registered post to *Mr. E. J. Chronowski, Grand Hôtel, Cracow, Austria.* If you have not got my letters yet, or if, having received them, you have not yet dispatched the cash as directed above, you had better ask Mr. Page to forward it to the Am. Amb. in Vienna with the request to him to forward it to me here. If the letter is gone already by the usual postal route, then it must take its chance; but it is very probable it will not reach me at all, and will not turn up here or back in England before the end of the war.

In the case of you *not* having sent me money when you receive this, it would be well if you could send me half the amount in gold. A small parcel has as much chance to reach me through the Embassies as a letter. I may not be able to change the notes here. You have no idea of the state of affairs here. Here we are a score of refugees of various nationalities (with a good many children) cut off from all news and expecting to have a very hungry time of it before long.

In *any* case, my dear fellow, do please write me a word at once, through Mr. Page, whom I have asked to keep comm^{on} with me open through his Vienna colleague. And if you have the slightest doubt as to the safety of the letter you may have sent already (on account of our war with Germany) do send me another supply through the Embassies. I want to be ready to clear out from here at the first opportunity. When the rush of the Austrian troops to the Russian frontier is over, there will be some service of trains again for the public; and then I shall try to get out of this through Vienna—Switzerland—South France—either to Bordeaux or Marseilles, if the Calais route is not available.

But to start at all, I shall want a military pass from the Austrian authorities; and I have asked Mr. Page to help me in that matter by requesting the Am. Amb. in Vienna to ask for it and generally to take me under his protection. This in case we should be at war with Austria as well as with Germany. If we are not, please apply to the Foreign Office to request our Ambassador in Vienna to help me all he can. And taking all these steps please remember that for all official and postal purposes I am Mr. Konrad Korzeniowski—because my passport is made out in that name.

Sorry to be worrying you like this. If I had been alone I wouldn't make half the fuss. But with four people (and one a cripple) I'll have an awful job to get out of this country. My health is good. I am getting a mental stimulus out of this affair—I can tell you! And if it were not for the unavoidable anxiety I would derive much benefit from the experience. I expect to put in three weeks' work here before we are able to move. Railways of course are closed now to all, except for the reduced postal service.

P. S. Do please send or better look in yourself at the Polish Bureau, Granville House (in your street) and inquire if Mr. Retinger has arrived. His wife is without news of him ever since he started to try and get back to London. You will either tell him or leave word for him that she is well and with us here. You will be doing a great kindness to very nice people.

P. P. S. It would be best for you to see Mr. Page and consult him as to what is to be done.

To J. B. Pinker

Villa Konstantynowka,
Zakopane, Galicia, Austria.
15th Sept., 1914.

MY DEAR PINKER,

All my letters by post to you beginning with the first of 29th July have been returned as stopped by war. One letter from me I know you must have had. It is the letter enclosed in my letter to Mr. Page which Sir Maurice de Bunsen, English ambassador in Vienna, promised to deliver to Mr. Page personally. I imagine you have not been able yet to communicate with the American ambassador in Vienna. He has my address but I have not heard from him for three weeks now. We are here

destitute of means, without warm clothing, and indeed in a very deplorable plight. If we had the money we could yet get away. What it will be in a week's time I can't say. I am going to try to get away to Italy, but I have little hopes of raising the money here. If we manage to get through I shall wire you from the first Italian town for further means to proceed to England, as I shall not be able to get enough for the whole journey here—*if indeed I can get anything at all.* If you haven't sent anything yet (at least £100) through the Am: Embassies (London —Vienna) you may at any rate let me know by the agency in Milan to which I entrust this letter. Please address your answer: *Messrs. Riccardo Hirschfeld & Co., 8 Via Giuliani. Milan (Italy) for Mr. J. Conrad.* They will do the rest, having an agent in Cracow.

I have paid them my last 10 sh[illin]gs. to cover the forwarding of this through to you and the forwarding of your answer to me. I can't send you a check on my acct. by this letter as it will have to go in an open envelope as far as Milan.

Pray let Jack know of our plight; and give news of us as being well, up to now, to *Mrs. George, Foxhole Farm, Benenden, Cranbrook, Kent.*[1] Also to *G. F. W. Hope, Esq., "Vellela," Chalkwell Park Drive. Leigh-on-Sea, Essex.* Likewise with news of our detention to *E. W. Oliver, Esq., New Place, Linafield, Surrey,* to *Sir S. Colvin* and to *R. Curle,* and of course to the Gibbons.

Will you also explain my position to *The Manager of Lloyds Bank in Ashford?* Pray do the same to *Miss Nellie Lyons, Mill Cottage, Sturry, Nr. Canterbury,* directing her to stay in Capel House if she likes and sending her £5 at once to live on, with a recommendation to keep the place aired. She is to let Morgan, Greenland and Wall know that our return is delayed by the war.

I don't apologize for giving you all this bother. I've no option. I have not found myself in this position through any fault of mine. No one believed in the war till the last moment when the mobilization order caught us in Cracow. I had no choice but to rush my people up to this place. If you want to know where it is, look due south from Cracow where there is a knot of mountains marked on the map. I have now exhausted my credit in this place and have no notion what will become of us all unless we get some money from you soon. I can't give you any news, but I will say that you ought to think yourselves lucky to have the Channel between you and what is going on in Europe now.

[1] Mrs. Joseph Conrad's mother.

To J. B. Pinker

Palace Hotel—Milan.
20 Oct., '14.

MY DEAR PINKER,

I have wired you this morning for money. Cook & Son are ready to transfer telegraphically sums up to £40 on any one day. But I want £120 for reasons which it would take too long to explain here. One of them is that fares alone from here to Falmouth (via Geneva—Barcelona, Bilbao—Falmouth) will amount to £64 for the four of us and I must have at least £16 more for expenses. Pray, my dear friend, attend to it at once as there's no use in running up expenses here. I ask you, rather than the bank, to have the advantage of your personal interest in my fate, which I am sure is not indifferent to you.

I acknowledged at once your letter in German, by private conveyance as far as Italy. Jack's too. I wonder if you and he had those cards? My nerves have been strained to the utmost but I am holding out well, only now and then I feel awfully tired. Wife's well. Small kid has been seedy twice and is a source of some anxiety.

Once more: it is £120 that I must have. There is that amount in the bank. Fact is I've agreed to repay some moneys lent me in Galicia to relatives of the lender who are cut off from home by the war here and in great poverty. This must be done, of course, before everything else.

To (Sir) Ralph Wedgwood

Capel House.
15 Nov., '14.

DEAR MR. WEDGWOOD,

Ever since our return I have been laid up. This is the first day I can sit at my desk and handle the pen.

Many thanks for your friendly letter which you found time to write in the strain of these stormy days.

However reasonably optimistic one can be the thoughts of this war sit on one's chest like a nightmare. I am painfully aware of being crippled, of being idle, of being useless with a sort of absurd anxiety, as though it could matter to the greatness of the Empire. Borys is intensely miserable at not being yet of the serviceable age. The fact that he has failed in his exam. does not contribute to lift the gloom.

I imagine how busy you must be and what a stressful time you must be having. Pray give my most friendly regards to Mrs. Wedgwood and my love to the children. Borys begs to be remembered.

To Mr. and Mrs. Galsworthy

Capel House.
15 Nov., '14.

MY DEAREST JACK AND ADA,

I was really too ill to write before. You must know that I started on our journey from Austria with an already gouty knee. It was a propitious moment which I dared not miss; the great rush of German and Austrian re-inforcing troops was over for a time and the Russians were falling back after their first advance. So we started suddenly, at one in the morning, on the 7th Oct. in a snowstorm in an open conveyance of sorts to drive 30 miles to a small railway station where there was a chance of finding something better than a horse-truck to travel in with *ma petite famille*. From there to Cracow, some fifty miles, we sat 18 hours in a train smelling of disinfectants and resounding with groans. In Cracow we spent untold hours sitting in the restaurant by the railway station, waiting for room in some train bound to Vienna. All the time I suffered exquisite tortures—Ada will understand. We managed to get away at last and our journey to Vienna was at comparatively lightning speed; 26 hours for a distance which in normal conditions is done in five hours and a half. But in Vienna I had to go to bed for five days. Directly I could put foot to the ground again we made a fresh start, making for Italy, which we entered through Cormona, the better Pontebba route being closed.

Borys was very good, showing himself vigorous and active in looking after his crippled parents and his small brother. Jessie went through it all with her usual serenity. During the sea-passage from Genoa to Gravesend (in a Dutch mailboat) I managed to hobble about the decks but felt beastly ill all the time. In London I felt even worse. On reaching home I just rolled into bed and remained there till yesterday, in a good deal of pain but mostly suffering from a sort of sick-apathy which I am trying now to shake off.

I won't try to write more just now. Perhaps we'll see each other before long. As to what you call "this hell," it is fiendish enough in all conscience: but it may be more in the nature of a Purgatory if only in this respect that it won't last for ever. It's the price nations have to pay for many sins geographical and historical, of commission and of omission,—but the door of Mercy is not closed: neither can it kill the hope of better things. At least, one would fain believe so: but it is a bitter weariness to think endlessly about it. So no more at present. Our dear love to you both.

CHAPTER XI

LAST YEARS

1915–1924

There is something fine in the sudden passing away of these hearts from the extremity of struggle and stress and tremendous uproar,—from the vast unrestful rage of the surface to the profound peace of the depths, sleeping untroubled since the beginning of ages.

("THE MIRROR OF THE SEA")

At the beginning of 1915 Conrad recorded his impressions of his visit to Poland in four articles written for the *Daily Mail,* afterward combined under the title "Poland Revisited" and included in *Notes on Life and Letters.* His nerves and imagination now stood in more need than ever of the bracing distraction of literary work. His eldest son, barely eighteen, had joined the army and the anxieties of war-time pressed ever nearer to his door. By the end of March he had finished *The Shadow Line,* for which he drew upon his memories of his first command. His works had brought him release from care, but the lack of correspondence between the comparative merits of his novels and the money they severally earned did not escape his ironic attention. His thoughts went back to his past achievements:

"The Planter of Malata" alone earned eight times as much as "Youth," six times as much as "Heart of Darkness." It makes one sick. However, I was stumped with my novel and it was either sitting doing nothing or writing these stories. It was hardly a choice. I could not afford to sit doing nothing with the gout always over my head." [1]

In September his son obtained a commission in the Mechanical Transport Corps and Mrs. Conrad had to undergo a second operation upon her knee, and fits of gout now fre-

[1] Undated letter to John Galsworthy, end 1915.

quently crippled his hands, though never his resolute energy. During the early part of 1916 he was almost continuously ill, but he managed nevertheless to produce two stories, which are by no means negligible items in his work: "The Warrior's Soul" and "The Tale" (see *Tales of Hearsay*). And at the suggestion of his friend and literary agent, J. B. Pinker, he began to revise and rewrite *The Rescue,* which he had put aside twenty years before, while also lending Mr. Macdonald Hastings a hand in dramatizing *Victory*. His health improving, he accepted the Admiralty's invitation to visit several naval stations in the United Kingdom and to put on record some account of the war-work of the R.N.V.R. He visited with this object Edinburgh and Liverpool; at Yarmouth he made a flight in an aëroplane. He was next offered a fortnight's cruise in the North Sea in a "Q" Boat, the *Ready,* which he willingly accepted in spite of his ill-health and sixty years. These activities stimulated him. Contact with sailors and officers of the Mercantile Marine brought back his youth and his pride at having once been one of them: "Now I have the prospect of being allowed to proceed to sea for a fortnight or so in a special service ship," he wrote to a friend, "I feel twenty years younger." But his strength was insufficient for such occupations; he had soon to return to his study. Part of 1917 he spent in writing prefaces for new editions of his works. In September he plunged deep into the memories of his youth and in *The Arrow of Gold* brought back to life the days he had spent at Marseilles in 1876. He finished it on June 14, 1918.

He had barely completed it when he set seriously to work upon *The Rescuer,* which he brought to an end on May 25, 1919, twenty-three years and two months after he had begun it. It was not finished at Capel House, which he had left, but at Spring Grove, Wye, near Ashford, where he lived for a few weeks before moving to Oswalds, Bishopsbourne, near Canterbury, in which house he spent the remaining years of his life. He continued to write prefaces for his Complete Edition, and during the close of 1919 and the beginning of 1920, he extracted a play from *The Secret Agent.*

At times he was haunted by the fear that he would never

be able to write again. This anxiety was not unfamiliar to him; he had experienced such apprehensions from the outset of his literary career, but the very fact that so many works and so many years now lay behind him made it the more acute. He knew he had not lost the faculty of writing, but it seemed to him sometimes that he had exhausted his stock of memories. "I have done nothing for the last six months," he wrote to Edward Garnett on New Year's Day, 1920, "and I feel that I'll never do anything more. Somehow I don't feel so happy about it as I ought to—for what could be more soothing than a sense of impotence?" There can be no doubt about the sincerity of this misgiving. That year he finished the play, "The Secret Agent" and wrote prefaces for *A Set of Six, Under Western Eyes, Chance,* and *'Twixt Land and Sea.* He also arranged his short story, "Gaspar Ruiz," as a film play and "Because of the Dollars" for the stage, and, finally, he began that Napoleonic romance, which he had dreamt over ever since 1907, and which became *Suspense.* His imagination was still vitally active.

The year 1920 was spent at Oswalds, with the exception of three weeks in September which he spent at the South Eastern Hotel, Deal, in the company of J. B. Pinker. At the beginning of 1921 he resolved to stay some weeks in Corsica, in order to breathe the right atmosphere for his novel about Napoleon. Accompanied by Mrs. Conrad and G. Jean-Aubry he proceeded by car from Calais to Marseilles, by short stages. They stopped at Rouen, Dreux, Chartres, Arthenay, Orleans, Moulins, Roann, Lyons, Montelimar, and Marseilles. He stayed at Ajaccio till the first days of April, but both while in Corsica and after his return to Oswalds his novel gave him great trouble; the theme seemed to escape him continually. "I can't get my teeth into the novel," he wrote to John Galsworthy, and a little later in a letter to E. L. Sanderson he says:

> My work is in arrears. My spirits not exalted. My body full of twinges. I am tired of thinking. I mean thinking on purpose and away from reality—as a daily task.

To Richard Curle, too, he wrote,

I am trying desperately to get on with the novel and feel rather worried about it.

He decided to break off and write a short story which was wanted to complete a volume. What he aimed at producing was a story of moderate length, but, as happened before in the case of *Lord Jim,* in the process of composition the story grew into a novel. It grew into *The Rover,* which he published on July 28, 1922.

It was on the 3rd of November of this year that "The Secret Agent" was first performed. He had attended only a few rehearsals; the piece was soon withdrawn. His letters of this date reflect the various ways in which he felt about these experiences.

He then betook himself to the composition of *Suspense,* only to break off again to write the introduction to Mr. Thomas Beer's *Life of Stephen Crane* and to visit New York on the invitation of his publisher and friend, F. N. Doubleday. He left Glasgow on board the *Tuscania* on April 20, 1923. His friend David Bone was her captain and Muirhead Bone, the artist, accompanied him. He stayed six weeks with Mr. and Mrs. Doubleday at Oyster Bay, N. Y., but in spite of numerous requests to appear in public and to deliver lectures, he only consented to give one reading from *Victory,* with comments. This took place before an audience of fifty people at the house of Mrs. Arthur Curtiss James in New York, on May 10th. From May 15th to the 24th he was motoring from New York to Boston, and on June 2nd he sailed in the *Majestic* for England. July and August were spent at Oswalds; at the beginning of September he visited Havre with Mrs. Conrad and his younger son, John; the object of this visit being to place the boy with a French family. This was to be the last time Conrad crossed the sea.

To Mrs. [Lady] Wedgwood

Capel House,
28 Jan., '15.

DEAR MRS. WEDGWOOD,

I simply could not have written to you before. Physical inability. A

gouty right hand. But I would not admit to myself that it was very bad, I *would* hope that it would get better next week,—and with characteristic masculine obstinacy would not let my sensible wife write to you for me. And thus weeks have slipped away, and now I hardly dare to intrude my belated handwriting upon your notice.

Richard [Curle] was here up to an hour ago and cheered me on by assurances of your forgiveness. We talked of you, of your husband and of the children. Memories of peace! Seeing Richard in a less-than-usual volatile mood I ventured to ask him whether you and Mr. Wedgwood would accept the dedication of my next book, which is a volume of short stories to appear in March.[1]

He encouraged me to ask you and here you are asked accordingly in the hope of a favourable answer. I don't know that these four stories will have any particular significance in the public eye, but I cherish a particular feeling for that volume as a deliberate attempt on four different methods of telling a story,—an essay in craftsmanship which of course the public won't notice, but which to you, as a fellow-worker, may offer some interest.

It seems almost criminal levity to talk at this time of books, stories, publicaton. This war attends my uneasy pillow like a nightmare. I feel oppressed even in my sleep and the moment of waking brings no relief,—on the contrary. And yet how well the country stands it all.

I do hope you and the children are well. Believe me, dear Mrs. Wedgwood,

Your very faithful friend and servant.

To A. Marwood

Tuesday,
30 Apr., 15.

MY DEAR MARWOOD,

I am much relieved by your letter as far as *Victory* is concerned, but I am distressed by what you say of that extreme feeling of lassitude from which you suffer. Of course, this is the season of queer sensations and it may not mean much,—a matter of a day or two. Perhaps you will drop me a line. For various reasons I can't fix a day yet for my visit this week and I want to know how you are.

You, my dear fellow, are the real Wise Man of the Age. I am so convinced of the truth of what you say that I'd have cabled to U. S. the correction you suggest, if it hadn't been too late. By the same post I received to-day a clipping of the Boston *Transcript*,—review of *Victory!*

[1] *Within the Tides.*

The only thing I can do now is to delete the lines pointed out by you, in the English edition. I can't tell you how grateful I am to you for your friendship, which speaks aloud to me out of the lines of your letter so indulgent and so careful of my good fame and fortune.

P. S. Gibbon, who arrived home on Sunday and turned up here last night, sends his regards.[1] I shall have much to tell you when we meet.

To Ford Madox Hueffer

Capel House.
30 Aug., 1915.

MY DEAR FORD,

I answer at once on the question of glasses. The pair you may remember knocking about at the Pent has in the process of time (and by some help from John's hands) dissolved into its primitive elements. But even if these glasses had been still in existence they would not have been good enough for your purpose. They were my watchkeeping glasses, just sufficient to pick up a ship's lights at night. You would want something much more efficient.

You won't be surprised to hear that you have been much in my thoughts of late. It must have been an enormous change in your mental habits; but I know your wonderful intellectual adaptability and your letter, most welcome, is very much what I expected it to be.

Yes! *mon cher!* our world of 15 years ago is gone to pieces: what will come in its place, God knows, but I imagine doesn't care.

Still what I always said was the only immortal line in *Romance:* "Excellency, a few goats," survives,—esoteric, symbolic, profound and comic,—it survives.

Love from us all here.

To Mrs. Dummett

Capel House,
Tuesday, 26 Oct., '15.

DEAR MRS. DUMMETT,

My wife is not very well to-day and I have insisted on her lying down. She will write for herself in a day or two. She has been nursing me for a week! On the top of that she had the shock of a very nice

[1] Perceval Gibbon, the novelist.

woman, a good neighbour of ours, losing her only son in the trenches. The consequence of all that is a little fit of neuralgia. A very beastly little fit.

Indeed we were delighted to see you under our roof. And as it is with good things we hope for more. Soon,—if I may suggest. The Prince Errant[1] told my wife he would like to come down again before long. We have taken eager note of that half-promise. So please, if opportunity offers, remind him of it. And if he really can manage it, why not come down with him, sharing the hardships of the journey into the wilds of Kent? We would be *en petit comité*. It would have been so last Sunday, only when the P. E.'s wire came the invitations were made.

The name Prince Errant I use discreetly, in my thoughts: to my wife who understands me: to one or two discriminating friends. It is disclosed to you as to a person eminently to be trusted: I am not sure that he wouldn't be angry if he were to know, tho' indeed it has been conferred in all affection and admiration of many years' standing. It was a great comfort to see him looking positively younger after his labours in South America, and with an air of content, as if the dip in the atmosphere of his early days has soothed and rejuvenated him.

Our big boy made a dash from Woolwich (where he was drawing stores and shells for his battery) to see us. He arrived at six in the evening,—less than an hour after you left!—and departed at 3 in the morning back to the arsenal.

Believe me, dear Mrs. Dummett, your very faithful and obedient servant.

To R. B. Cunninghame Graham

Capel House.
28 Oct., '15.

TRÈS CHER AMI,

I've just finished *B. Diaz.*[2] The terminal pages of the preface are just lovely with their irresistible reference to the *tempi passati*. As to the book itself no personal friend of one old conquistador could have put it together with greater skill and more tender care.

You have given us there a series of *vignettes en suite* set off by your

[1] R. B. Cunninghame Graham.

[2] *Bernal Diaz del Castillo, Being Some Account of Him Taken from His True History of the Conquest of New Spain,* by R. B. Cunninghame Graham. London, Eveleigh Nash, 1915.

most characteristic prose and coloured by your invincible indignations and most lofty prejudices.

At least so the world would call them, prejudices!

I am not feeling bright at all. *Cette guerre a été bien mal engagée! Enfin!*

À vous de cœur.

To the Editor of the Sydney *Bulletin*

March, 1916.

Why apologize! It is always a pleasure to hear from Sydney, the town of my youthful affection—not to mention the *Bulletin,* where the Torch of Letters has been kept burning at the Antipodes for so many years.

My Frenchman without hands I knew in December, 1878.[1] He kept a small tobacco shop in George Street, not very far from the Circular Quay. Both his hands were gone. He was then 75 if a day, and didn't look like a man who would live long. He used to spin long, Melanesian yarns, but he was not very interesting—except for the pent up store of energy one was aware of in that maimed body. For all I knew he *might* have been the model of all the virtues—but I doubt if this accident then was not rather recent; the stumps were always neatly bandaged; there was no question of any hook or mechanical contrivance. I am sure he was not M. Pierre of your correspondents.

Apart from the physical appearance, everything about him in the story is "all same one piecie lie."

But the episode of the poet on the hearthrug[2] which seems to have shocked my good reviewer on the Red Page is a fact! I don't know if such things happen in Sydney. They do happen in London though, where —as you know—everything happens. As the office was the office of a still rather young review, I must not tell you its name, but you know it well. . . . No, I mustn't give away the secrets of the editorial room where I am allowed to drop in of an afternoon for a cup of tea—sometimes. My love and an old friend's blessing to your fine boys and to the Commonwealth passing through this fiery baptism into the rank of a world-power, not great yet, but bound to lead in its part of the world progress of worthy ideals.

[1] A character in the tale, "Because of the Dollars."

[2] See the tale "The Planter of Malata."

To J. B. Pinker

Capel House.
8 June, 1916.

MY DEAR PINKER,

I am sending you 135 pp. of Part IV consisting of old, (24 pp.) newly arranged, rewritten, and new stuff.[1]

Please have one copy made. The numbering of the pp. should be followed as per MS., but in addition I should like each page to have the roman numeral IV in the left-hand upper corner.

It will be an immensely long book. It can't be helped. And if that fact stands in the way of serial pub^on^—why then it must stand. I put my trust in you but I don't expect you to work miracles.

It will be a considerable piece of work. And if it is very long as well, it doesn't follow that it will be wearisome to read. Indeed I have never thought so well of it as now since I have devoted myself to it exclusively. I only wish I could absorb myself utterly, forget myself in it—but this is impossible. I have neither the power of detachment nor yet that intensity of belief in my work which perhaps would have made it possible. My health, however, has improved in the last fortnight in a marked way. I am speaking of my body. The mind perhaps will follow.

To J. B. Pinker

[Aug., 1916]
Wednesday.

MY DEAR PINKER,

I had scenario (Act I) from M. Hastings.[2] He's all right. Of course I don't like the whole thing. You know me too well not to understand. But the man is about the best we can get and anyhow it is a cert: Great point—and he said himself to me: "if that sort of thing is done at all it should be done for the money in it."

I won't interfere, but I will assist whenever asked. The bill should state—"a play in (?) acts adapted by M. H. from the novel by J. C." —not: "a play by J. C. & M. H." I can't have that. He agrees. Actual terms you will settle and I'll sign whatever they may be.

He asks for assistance. Very well. One can talk to him anyhow and I may learn a few things on this occasion. I am not done yet, tho' I am not making a very good show just now. My brain's on the simmer all the

[1] *The Rescuer.*
[2] The dramatization of *Victory.*

time. I intend to make my profit in the way of knowledge this time and get into close touch with the stage. Who knows? . . .

You will admit I have some faculty of dialogue. Also *dramatic* interest. (I expect "Youth," "Typhoon" and generally the purely sea-things.) But the bulk *is* dramatic. And if I can only learn to adapt my faculty for dialogue and drama to the conditions of the stage, then . . . At any rate, since M. H. is a man with whom one can be friendly I mean to attend the rehearsals closely and see what I can make of it. I am not ossified yet. I am still impressionable and can adapt my mind to various forms of thought—and, perhaps, of art. We shall see.

To Richard Curle

Capel House
20th August, 1916.

MY DEAR CURLE,

We were glad to hear from you. We hope you are now settled down and improving in your health rapidly.

Of public affairs I have nothing to say that you don't know already by the cables. Borys wishes in his last letter to be remembered to you. He's still with the guns, being now attd. *personally* to the artillery of the III[d] corps. I suppose he is as much in the actual scrimmage as an officer of his corps can possibly be.

I will confess to you that I miss you considerably. Your departure following on M'wood's [1] death left a great void. Our life here has been running in its usual groove, but I am sorry to say Jessie has not been so well as she is usually. Troubles of an enteric nature, rather obstinate and causing me some anxiety. John flourishes and keeps you in mind. Gibbon [2] returned from Russia a week ago and without seeing us proceeded to Switzerland to seek the bosom of his *petite famille*. Millais [3] is invalided out of the Navy for good. He and his mother made friendly inquiries as to your health. We made the acquaintance of a new young woman. She comes from Arizona and (strange to say!) she has an European mind. She is seeking to get herself adopted as our big daughter and is succeeding fairly. To put it shortly she's quite yum-yum. But those matters can't interest a man of your austere character. So I hasten away from these pretty frivolities to inform you that we had here Lord Northcliffe for a Sunday afternoon. He was an immense success with John and Robert. In about 15 minutes they became extremely familiar

[1] His friend A. Marwood.
[2] Perceval Gibbon.
[3] Sir John Millais, grandson of the painter. He died not very long after.

with him, dragging him all over the place to look at the birds' nests and so on. In return for these attentions, he invited them for two days to his house in Broadstairs. They are going there soon in the great man's Rolls-Royce which will come for them. That same subtle Northcliffe got round the Lady Jessie by feeling references to his mother which certainly had the stamp of sincerity on them.

Retinger's [1] activities go on at white heat—personal success immense, political what it can be and, indeed, better than one would have thought it possible in the hopeless state of the Polish question. He created for himself certain titles to a hearing by accomplishing a brilliant piece of work last month as an unofficial intermediary between the British and French Governments. In truth the position was delicate. But it's too long a story for this letter. I too have dipped my fingers in diplomacy by writing a memorandum on the peace settlement on the Eastern front which got into the F. O.[2] The official I interviewed later said as I was leaving—"Well, I never thought I would have this sort of conversation with the author of *The Nigger of 'Narcissus.'*" Which shows the man to have the sense of contrasts in him, though he looked like a stick of sealing wax and seemed to be made of parchment. For the rest, a perfect *homme du monde* and some years ago (I understand) known for his *succès de salon*—of the non-political kind. Well—I must stop now—the continuation in my next.

To Christopher Sandeman

Capel House.
31 Aug., 1916.

MY DEAR SANDEMAN,

The cause to which you are so friendly, and for which R[etinger] is going to put his head into the noose (unless wiser counsels prevail) I look at from the English point of view, which is only tinged with the ineradicable sentiment of origin—as indeed is but natural. That is why I wrote the short memoir [3], motived as much by my sentiments of allegiance as by my sentiments of origin. It is the only arrangement under which I could be sure,—when closing my eyes on this sublunary scene,—that the Poles could never be drawn into antagonism to England. Germanism and Prussianism are equally uncertain. And even if we dismiss Germanism as unthinkable, the fact remains that the greatest of forces, the National Spirit, has its limits of endurance. Poland attached to

[1] Joseph Retinger, a young Polish friend.
[2] "Note on the Polish Problem." (See *Notes on Life and Letters.*)
[3] The "Note on The Polish Problem" referred to in the previous letter.

Russia would end by getting absorbed either by massacre or conciliation or by mere economic pressure or from other hopeless aspects of its future. And I submit that with all possible loyalty to our present engagements it is no part of our duty to work gratuitously for the aggrandizement of Russia, which is big enough in all conscience. And, after all, if Poland owes something to Russia, she owes even more to England and France. Without the Western Powers there would have been the biggest crumpling up in the history of the world: and the Germans would be watering their horses in the Volga to-day.

As to what you ask, all I can say is that H—— is a very good name, possibly of Ruthenian origin. But Ruthenian headmen became Polish nobles during the first years of the 15th Century. You must not forget that I left the border provinces in '69 and Poland altogether in 1873.[1] My last relation on my Father's side died in '76 in Siberia:[2] and since my maternal uncle's death, now 25 years ago, I haven't exchanged ten letters with Poland till quite lately. As far as personalities and inner movements are concerned, *je ne suis pas au courant. Comme informations de ce genre, je regrette infiniment de ne pas pouvoir vous servir.* The title itself means nothing: it may be of quite recent Austrian origin. But even in such generalities you must not trust me too much, as I may be quite wrong.

To J. B. Pinker

[Oct., '16.]

MY DEAR PINKER,

The expenses on hotels amount to more than £15. You will find here the slip with the exact amount and the receipted bills.

I enclose here for your edification the letter from Sir Douglas.[3] He's a good fellow. Hurrah! So that's settled. I am going—you know on what errand.[4] Should the ship fail to report herself for more than 10 days after the time fixed for her return (by wireless—at night) there will be no use hoping for her return. I shall ask Ad: Startin to communicate with you then.

I have no nearer friend on whom I could lay the painful task. I believe I have your approval; Borys isn't likely to be angry with my memory; Jessie understands and John knows nothing of course. As to

[1] In 1874.

[2] Hilaire Korzeniowski, his father's younger brother, died in Siberia in 1873; he had been sent to Siberia by the Russians after the Polish rising in 1863.

[3] Admiral Sir Douglas Brownrigg.

[4] This refers to Conrad's trip to the North for the Admiralty.

these last I know you will do all you can to make their fate as tolerable as it can be made.

That much had to be said, tho' don't imagine that I have gloomy forebodings. Nothing of the kind. Still it's no use ignoring the fact that the vessel has made three trips already and she may have been spotted. Also there are spies about. The prospect of an expedition of this sort gives a curious force to the idea of spies. It drives home to one's conviction that they do exist. Our service is pretty good too. The raid before last was notified to the Granton command 10 hours before the Zeps *started* from Germany. This is fairly smart work. I shall see you next week early, as I may get "the call" towards the end of it.

To Christopher Sandeman

Capel House.
Nov., 1916.

DEAR SANDEMAN,

Very many thanks for the warm friendliness of your letter.

The news of the changes at the Admiralty made public in to-day's papers is satisfactory: but this satisfaction is—so far as I am concerned—of the sentimental order only. I tell you this because I am certain you'll not misunderstand me.

Military operations in the direction of Zeebrugge (I mean pushed *à fond*) would have comforted me much more from the naval point of view. And from the other too. But I imagine they are impracticable since they have never been attempted.

I don't like that sort of inclination to spur on the Admiralty which I seem to detect in the public mind. Spur on—to what? This war (like every other) has to be won on land. The Navy has been playing—*is* playing—its part as well as ever it has played it before. If the public mind wants a great fleet victory I can't for the life of me see what material effect such a victory could have. Of course it would buck us up morally; it would be a great occasion for cheering all along the line. But the important consideration is that it would not demoralize Germany to any appreciable extent. For they know and admit their inferiority on that point.

What would demoralize Germany would be an advance of, say, 30 miles in the direction of Antwerp. It would shake their confidence more than the total annihilation of their fleet would do, if we could bring that about.

I detest myself for my abominably correct anticipation of events of

the Roumanian campaign. As it was based on my unfavourable view of Russia I would have been abused if I had voiced it.

But you know I am not blindly prejudiced.

To Mrs. Joseph Conrad

Edinburgh,
Sunday morning,
November, 1916.

MY DEAREST,

I begin by telling you that so far I've been very well, though I've had to exert myself physically a lot, and have been exposed to the wet all Friday.

On arriving that day at 1 A. M., I reported by 'phone to Granton and called on the Commodore at 9.30. He at once held up a ship going out to mend the deep-sea nets and proposed I should go on board of her for the day. As it was blowing and raining in torrents the Old Boy lent me his own hooded cloak, his sea-boots and stockings, and sent me off in his own launch. We went out to the net defences, but before long the ship was fairly washed away and blown off from her station. Her captain, a lieut:, said to me, "I don't think we can do any good work to-day." I said: "For God's sake, let's get out of this." And we got out accordingly. I was never so pleased in all my sea-life to get into shelter as I was on Friday at about 5 P. M.

On Saturday I went out with the Commodore inspecting and gun testing in the Firth of Forth. While we were at it 3 divisions of our newest destroyers came in from sea. It was an exceedingly fine sight. The day was fair and cold.

The weather generally is improving. On my return I found the wire from you and another from Jane saying there was some better news about Ada's permit and wishing me good luck.

The Forster baby duly arrived. I shall send you his mother's address by a later post. Poor Forster is away on very dangerous duty up Archangel way, where the Huns are playing the very devil with the shipping.

I shall join H. M. S. *Ready* on Monday, going out to her in the Commodore's flagship. The Old Boy is coming too to inspect her and send her off. Of one thing you may be sure and that is that she isn't going to the Norway coast. She will be kept somewhere near the English coast. Pray do not be uneasy if you don't hear from me for some days. She's not likely to communicate. It's safer not to do so. She may be a whole fortnight away before making port. On the other hand I may be back in 10 days or even sooner.

All my love to you and the kid. My heart and thought are with you and with the ever-great [Borys]. I am dropping him a short note. I've also sent him a November box. I'll also write a few words to Pink, to David and maybe to Northcliffe, whom I did see ultimately on Thursday and who was very amiable. Very.

Enormous hug to you both. Your ever loving man.

To Mrs. Joseph Conrad

Royal Hotel,
Lowestoft,
Friday 10 P. M. [1916]

DEAR OWN,

This morning I learned your address at last and therefore I dispatched my first letter (written on board the train) there. Thanks for your wires. They were very welcome. I had also one from Jane advising me she was going to join you on Saturday. I hope nothing will stand in the way, for I would be glad to know that you are not deprived of the company of the woman you have an affection for.

As to what I am doing here that will keep for the telling. I have moved a lot, seen a lot and heard even more. Last night after being on my feet from 3.30 to nearly seven,—in engine-rooms, up masts, down magazines, on bridges, down forepeaks on gun-platforms (practising aiming,—great fun), in sheds, storerooms, workshops,—I dined with the Commodore. Everybody most charming. To-day after inspecting all the anti-aircraft artillery I went out in a vessel of a special kind to try a new 13-pounder gun. We stuffed cotton-waste into our ears (there was nothing else) and started her barking. The report is certainly very sharp, but with one's ears well stopped all one gets is only a sort of friendly tap in the pit of one's stomach. Small defects of mountings were made good.[1] . . .

I keep fit tho' for one reason and another I feel very strung-up and my head is in a whirl.

I managed to get some sleep this afternoon, but turned out about 5 P. M. to see the *Halcyon* go to sea for her turn of patrol duty. She cleared the jetties at 14 knots and I, who know the fantastic behaviour of the tide-sweep outside this place, was delighted at the way she was shot out into it, just giving a 3-foot berth to the south pierhead. Very fine. But

[1] Here three lines erased with these words in the margin: "better left for telling."

of course child's-play to what the sailing-ship men had to do under canvas. And that too I have seen in the time that is past.

Don't communicate this letter to anybody, and, if asked, just say that I keep it all back for the telling. This does not apply to Jane, your partner in sea-side iniquities.

Have you heard from the boy? Is John good? When do you think you will be coming home?

To-morrow I am going to Yarmouth. Shall be back in the evening. For Sunday there are arrangements made. On Tuesday I may be ready to come home,—or I may not. I shall keep you posted by wire. It is also possible I shall be done here on Monday.

I wonder, dear heart, how your health is, whether you keep quiet and good and cheerful. I wonder! Do say something about yourself when you write on Sunday. On Monday you may not get a wire from me. Don't be uneasy because of that silence. It will be connected with local causes here most likely.

But I shall give you from Y'mouth the usual "All well" signal. It will reach you before this of course.

Blessings on you, best of chums. Take care of yourself for the boys' sake and mine. The boys anyway are worthy of you.

Give me the "All well" signal on Monday. I will do so too if possible.

Ever your devoted lover.

To J. B. Pinker

8th Nov. 1916, at sea.
By patrol boat.

DEAR FRIEND,

All well.
Been practice-firing in sight of coast.
Weather improved.
Health good.
Hopes of bagging Fritz high.
Have dropped a line to Jessie.
Don't expect to hear from me for 10 days.

Ever yours,

P. S. Give my love to Eric when you write.

To J. M. Dent

Capel House,
4 Dec., '16.

DEAR MR. DENT,

I don't know whether I ought to be flattered by your confident vision of myself as the prophet of future psychology. My natural inclination is to follow the doctrine of the American humourist who advised us wisely: "Never prophesy unless you know." And the longer I live the less I seem to know. But the little I still seem to know doesn't induce me to believe that the psychology of mankind will be much changed by this war,—for the reason, amongst many others, that mankind is essentially forgetful.

This, however, is a question one could discuss at endless length,—and I refrain.

I was in town not a very long time ago and I don't think I will be there again this year. Perhaps if you brought a new idea from the other side of the Atlantic you will jot it down for me on a piece of paper. I'll be most interested to know.

The story now appearing in the *E. R.*[1] is not long enough for a volume. It will be the first (probably) of a volume of short stories to appear in a more or less distant future with, I hope, your distinguished imprint on the title page.

But a long novel, not very far from its termination now, ought to appear first on a date which I am not bold enough to prophesy about yet. Proceeding on the American's principle, you shall hear of it directly "I know." I am alluding here to the *Rescue,* contracted to you outside our general agreement for 3 novels.

You mustn't be angry with me for the delay. My psychology has been affected by the way of inability to concentrate. I am sorry, but helpless. It isn't so much the war itself, as the course it has taken which is the cause of that unsatisfactory state. I am more emotional, it appears, than I imagined myself to be.

[1] *The Shadow Line* appeared serially in the *English Review* from September, 1916, till March, 1917. *The Shadow Line* was published as a separate volume in England in March, 1917, by Messrs. J. M. Dent & Sons, and in the United States in April, 1917, by Doubleday, Page & Co.

To R. B. Cunninghame Graham

Capel House.
3rd Jan., '17.

TRÈS CHER AMI,

I thought I could run up to say good-bye,[1]—but my swollen foot does not improve and I can just crawl across a room and no more. So these lines go to you,—*avec mon cœur,*—to wish you a safe journey and the success of the *entreprise,* and fine galloping days in the Sta Marta valley.

Your *protégé,* Borys, is expected on leave about the 15th. We haven't heard from him for more than 10 days, which is unusual,—but I don't suppose it means anything. Still Jessie is worried. She sends you her love and best wishes for your journey.

I can't say I've been very much bucked-up by the change of the government. The age of miracles is past.

To J. B. Pinker

Sunday [early, 1917.]

MY DEAR PINKER,

I enclose here a cutting. To have my work[2] held up as an example of the *English Review's* taste for the morbid has upset me very much. H——'s proceedings have been exasperating me all along, but I said nothing to you. It would have been no good as we couldn't 've done anything. Strangely enough I expected adverse comment (as the story was being noticed), tho' not in that precise shape. He has been doling it out in drops, as if it were poison. No wonder he spoiled its taste altogether.

So you see that a story may get a nasty rap on mere "publication" grounds. I confess I have grown awfully nervous about that piece of work—which is not a story really but exact autobiography. So of course is "Prince R."[3] and I suggested "P. R." mainly because its inclination would give me an occasion to say that distinctly in a preface. I really felt I would like it very much to be done. And it seemed suitable, as in the *de luxe* edition those two pieces will have to go together—with the preface the draft of which you have seen. So another *de luxe* vol. would have been settled by a 1st edition. The most, I think, satisfactory way of arranging a *de luxe* edition.

[1] R. B. Cunninghame Graham was on the point of going to Columbia.

[2] *The Shadow Line.*

[3] "Prince Roman," the tale published in the *Oxford and Cambridge Review* in October, 1911, and included in *Tales of Hearsay* in 1924.

I am really quite jumpy about this thing, and I think I'll cancel the dedication [1] as I don't want the boy's name to be connected with a work of which some imbecile is likely to say: that it is a "good enough" sort of story in the Conrad manner but not a work to be put out by itself with all that pomp, etc., etc. and to be charged such a price for.

As two autobiographical episodes I would have less fear—the preface explaining why they appear by themselves as they would be out of place amongst collected tales.

What do you think from *this* point of view?

To Sir Sidney Colvin

Capel House.
27 Febry., [1917.]

MY DEAR COLVIN,

We were much concerned to hear of your nasty fall on the stone steps outside your house. I hope you have got over the after effects completely by now.

Very dear of you to write so appreciatively about the little book. But I don't agree that a local-knowledge man would be the right reviewer for it. The locality doesn't matter; and if it is the Gulf of Siam it's simply because the whole thing is exact autobiography. I always meant to do it, and on our return from Austria, when I had to write something, I discovered that this was what I could write in my then moral and intellectual condition; tho' even *that* cost me an effort which I remember with a shudder. To sit down and invent fairy tales was impossible then. It isn't very possible even now. I was writing that thing in Dec., 1914, and Jan. to March, 1915. The very speeches are (I won't say authentic —they are that absolutely) I believe, verbally accurate. And all this happened in March–April, 1887.[2] Giles is a Capt. Patterson, a very well known person there. It's the only name I've changed. Mr. Burns's craziness being the pivot is perhaps a little accentuated. My last scene with Ransome is only indicated. There are things, moments, that are not to be tossed to the public's incomprehension, for journalists to gloat over. No. It was not an experience to be exhibited "in the street."—I am sorry you have received an impression of horror. I tried to keep the mere horror out. It would have been easy to pile it on. You may believe me, *J'ai vécu tout cela.* However, I will tell you a little more about all that

[1] *The Shadow Line* was published in a volume by itself and the dedication to the novelist's son stayed as it was.

[2] This refers to *The Shadow Line.* J. C. meant 1888. The name of Capt. Patterson was not the only one he changed, as we know that the name of the captain of S.S. *Vidar* was not Kent, as stated in the novel.

when we meet. Here I'll only say that experience is transposed into spiritual terms—in art a perfectly legitimate thing to do, as long as one preserves the exact truth enshrined therein. That's why I consented to this piece being published by itself. I did not like the idea of its being associated with fiction in a vol. of stories. And this is also the reason I've inscribed it to Borys—and the Others.

Our love to your house.

P. S. Re-reading your letter and going over the story I see that both places, Bangkok and Singapore, are distinctly named—but obviously they are not named in the right way or in proper context, since the mind of an "experienced reader" like yourself is left in doubt. And I must confess that the matter seemed to me of such slight importance compared with the subject treated that I really did not consider it at all while writing. *Don't* refuse Garvin's request if your heart is at all that way inclined.[1]

To Christopher Sandeman

Capel House.
14 Mch., '17.

MY DEAR SANDEMAN,

I am scandalized by your unpatriotic choice of disease,[2] but I hope you have repented and got rid of it by this time. You should model yourself on me and (if you must have something) employ the best brand of gout, as patronized from time immemorial by the Nobility and Gentry of this country and its most distinguished statesmen, beginning with the two Pitts, Palmerston, J. Chamberlain and many others in between.

Of course you will say that it is my snobbishness. Anyway I have been indulging in gout for the last six weeks and am ready to pass it on (cheap) to anyone who wants something really distinguished. For I am weary of that luxury—oh! how weary! . . .

Your suggestion is most welcome and the object of it seems most interesting from your description. A dash of Orientalism on white is very fascinating, at least for me; though I must say that the genuine Eastern had never the power to lead me away from the path of rectitude; to any serious extent—that is. I am afraid you will be shocked by the frivolity of these remarks.

I hope my adaptor (M. Hastings) will be able to come down this Saturday after the final interview with Irving, and I shall then put

[1] The request had been that Sir Sidney Colvin should review the book for the *Observer*.

[2] German measles.

forward the name and back it up in the terms of your letter. I agree totally with your opinion of Irving. At first, you know, he had Jones in his eye. Then he veered around to Heyst (a mistake, I believe).[1] The consequence was that poor H. had to alter the 1st and 2nd and rewrite completely the 3rd act. A horrid grind, but it improved the play beyond question. Of course it isn't the play as I would have tried to write it, but it's first rate stage-work—or I am much mistaken.

The point of criticism you raise in *Victory* (the novel) is not so apparent in the play. Perhaps you are right. But I still think the psychology quite possible. My fault is that I haven't made Lena's reticence *credible* enough—since a mind like yours (after reflexion) remains unconvinced. I need not tell you that while I wrote, her silence seemed to me truth itself, a rigorous consequence of the character and the situation. It was not invented for the sake of "the story." *Enfin!* What's done is done. And I am unfeignedly glad that you like the book as a whole.

Did I tell you we had our boy here on leave after a year in France? He celebrated his 19th birthday here. He is the M. T. officer of a battery of 6-in. howitzers and from his last letter (received yesterday) I see between the lines that our heavy guns are being trundled forward after Fritz pretty steadily. I was very pleased with him and with what he had to tell me. My poor wife snatched 10 days of fearful joy and paid for them afterwards, but she is her own calm self again now. A great relief to me.

To Sir Sidney Colvin

Capel House.
18 March, '17.

MY DEAR COLVIN,

In answer to your card, I write at once—first to tell you how glad I am to hear you have consented to Garvin's request, next to say that there can be no possible objection to your recognizing the autobiographical character of that piece of writing—let us call it. It is so much so that I shrink from calling it a Tale. If you will notice I call it *A Confession* on the title page. For, from a certain point of view, it is that—and essentially as sincere as any confession can be. The more perfectly so, perhaps, because its object is not the usual one of self-revelation. My object was to show all the others and the situation through the medium of my own emotions. The most heavily tried (because the most self-conscious), the

[1] This refers to the dramatization of *Victory*.

least "worthy" perhaps, there was no other way in which I could render justice to all these souls "worthy of my undying regard." [1]

Perhaps you won't find it presumption if, after 22 years of work, I may say that I have not been very well understood. I have been called a writer of the sea, of the tropics, a descriptive writer, a romantic writer —and also a realist. But as a matter of fact all my concern has been with the "ideal" value of things, events and people. That and nothing else. The humorous, the pathetic, the passionate, the sentimental *aspects* came in of themselves—*mais en vérité c'est les valeurs idéales des faits et gestes humains qui se sont imposés à mon activité artistique.*

Whatever dramatic and narrative gifts I may have are always, instinctively, used with that object—to get at, to bring forth *les valeurs ideales.*

Of course this is a very general statement—but roughly I believe it is true.

Dent proposes to publish in the last week of March; but I shouldn't be surprised if there was some delay.

Our most affectionate regards.

To J. B. Pinker

Thursday.
[1917.]

MY DEAR PINKER,

Many thanks for the book where indeed the article on J. C. is wonderful in sympathy and insight. I know you have no time for correspondence or I would ask you to tell me who John Freeman is. I know he wrote two vols. of verse and I judge he must belong to Mrs. Meynell's circle. Anyway I am grateful to him for what he found to say about my work. I would like to see him and perhaps to know him—but just now one has no heart much for anything.

I don't know what to do as to Nat. Service.[2] It was no good to send my name while I was in bed. Now I am out of it but can hardly move for lumbago. And what could I do? I could perhaps be employed about the docks or something of the sort; but men between 50 and 60 are doing it now, no doubt. With my uncertain health I feel that it's hardly worth while, for the infinitesimal use I may be, to throw away the chance of doing my own work—such as it is. And I also feel very wretched about it.

[1] The expression in quotation marks is commented upon in the last paragraph of the Author's Note to *The Shadow Line.*

[2] This refers to a National Service Appeal made by the Government.

To Hugh R. Dent

Capel House.
19. 3. '17.

DEAR MR. DENT,

Thanks very much for your letter and the copies of the book. I have now eighteen of them, of which two will go to the U. S. to two collectors, friends of mine who always get *all* the English editions,—but to whom I always send the first signed by myself.

Can't say I am delighted at the Russian revolution. The fate of Russia is of no interest whatever to me: but from the only point of view I am concerned about,—the efficiency of the Alliance,—I don't think it will be of any advantage to us. Political trustworthiness is not born and matured in three days. And as to striking power, an upheaval of that sort is bound to affect it adversely for a time at least. However, we shall see.

To J. M. Dent

Capel House.
27. 3. '17.

DEAR MR. DENT,

It's very pleasant to hear that the first ed. of 5,000 has been sold. The war-shortage of paper is of course regrettable; one must put up with these things without repining. We will do better with the next book. My writing days are not over. I am not an "old" author. I was 38 when my first book was published,—and that was in the year in which I finished writing it.

I return here Mr. St. Clair's letter as requested. Of course, like everybody else, I was a reader of the *Singapore Free Press* which was *the* paper of the East as between Rangoon and Shanghai. But indeed I knew very little of and about shore-people. I was chief mate of the S.S. *Vidar* and very busy whenever in harbour. And anyway I would not have cared to form social connections, even if I had had time and opportunity. Naturally I knew something of most of the people he mentions. I also knew some he was not likely to meet at the Club and of whom he could not have had other than merely journalistic knowledge. I will drop him a line in a day or two,—for the sake of old times. His recollection of Capt. Ellis does not seem very exact. Capt. E. was certainly big but not a "raw-boned Irishman." He was a fine, dignified personality, an ex-Naval officer. But journalists can't speak the truth,—not even see

it as other men do. It's a *professional* inability, and that's why I hold journalism for the most demoralizing form of human activity, made up of catch phrases, of mere daily opportunities, of shifting feelings.

I shall certainly call on you the very first time I come to town. But I am still very lame.

P. S. Yes, Colvin was good.[1] I don't think I'll see the other notices. I never look at them (unless by somebody I know) though my wife makes a collection, I believe. I've heard that the *Nation's* review was "real criticism." I'll look at it.

To Mrs. Dummett

Capel House.
29. 3. '17.

DEAR MRS. DUMMETT,

Thanks ever so much for your kind and delightful letter. The first time I come to town I shall repeat my thanks in person.

This morning we had the great and unexpected pleasure of receiving a letter from dear don Roberto [2] dated 21st Feby. from Cartagena, and written obviously in good health and spirits. It fairly glows (like all he writes) with his inextinguishable youth and his love for the visible world, which he has enriched by his understanding and his creations with the art of a compassionate magician.

The few lines he gives to Cartagena brought to me for a moment the feeling of my vanished youth. I saw the place for the first and last time in 1875.[3] It seems not to have changed a bit.

Jessie sends her dear love.

I am, dear Mrs. Dummett, always your most faithful friend and servant.

To Hugh R. Dent

3. 4. '17.

DEAR MR. DENT,

I return Twentyman's letters.[4] He was one of the score or so of boys

[1] Sir Sidney Colvin's review in the *Observer*.

[2] R. B. Cunninghame Graham.

[3] J. C. meant 1876.

[4] Ernest W. G. Twentyman, Lieut. R. N. R., had written to J. M. Dent & Son asking for Mr. Joseph Conrad's address, adding: "I may mention that Mr. Conrad was mate of the Barque *Highland Forest* of Glasgow when and on which

that passed through my hands when I was chief officer of various ships. It's pleasant to see that the pains I took to make good seamen of them are not forgotten by those grizzled men. When I last saw him he was 17 and I 27 in Samarang.

To Christopher Sandeman

Capel House,
3. 4. '17.

MY DEAR SANDEMAN,

I am grieved to hear of the neuritis. What a beastly thing to happen to one. I am much disturbed to think that you have inflicted on yourself the pain of writing your most welcome letter.

It's the sort of thing that'll make me shy of writing to you, to my great loss, because (you may have noticed it) I do turn to you to ease my mind on various matters in which I feel I'll be understood by you better than by anyone. *Vous êtes mon correspondant très spécial.*

I wonder what form X's activities will take now. The Russian proclamation is very fine but—⅔rds of the Polish territory (on the basis of the 1772 frontier) are in German hands. And peace will have to come soon. From our point of view Russia, I am afraid, will be non-existent for some time, and that, of course, makes one think anxiously of the Western front.

Had another elated letter from the boy dated six days ago. I believe the whole army is elated.

Tout à vous.

To Miss Catherine Willard

Capel House.
Easter Monday, 1917.

DEAR CATHERINE,

I only wish I could be an useful friend to you. H. B. Irving has dropped me a note, and I daresay you've heard from him already. I

ship I was serving my apprenticeship. As I am now home for the duration of the war, from Fiji Islands (South Pacific), I would, however, before returning, very much like to meet Mr. Conrad, as, although in his *Mirror of the Sea* he does not give me too good a character as a boy, he was always exceedingly kind to us boys, a thing that is not easily forgotten by those who appreciate same as I do. . . . I wish to get into touch with one that has shown me many a kindness, although perhaps not deserving it at the time; we, like most boys at the age when I was under Mr. Conrad, did not realize what kindness really meant."

am afraid nothing can come of it now, but perhaps in the future——?

I see from a paragraph in the *Observer* that you have a part in "Love for Love." That Congreve is amazing and "L. for L." is certainly the best stage play, though I think that "The Way of the World" is a greater work.

"Angelica" does not come up to "Mrs. Millamant." I am afraid Mama Grace [1] will think it scarcely proper for me to talk to you about Congreve's plays. But you needn't read them yet. The rest is silence.

Our love to you (each in her own way) charming women.

Bien à vous.

To Miss Catherine Willard

Capel House.
19. 4. '17.

DEAR CATHERINE,

Thanks for your note. I am glad the Great Man [2] was gracious. I shall drop him a line so as not to lose touch for the future. I am sorry there is no woman's part besides Lena in "Victory"; I mean something that would be of use for you to attempt. There are two or three Orchestra Girls but these are not "parts" in my sense.

I have taken a most desperate resolve to turn dramatist before long and then perhaps I'll write a part for you. It would have to be something *très gentil et très malicieux en même temps.* Somehow I fancy you could do that very well—*sans avoir l'air d'y toucher,* you know.

Our affectionate regards to you both.

Tout à vous.

To Sir Sidney Colvin

Saturday,
[21. 4. 1917.]

MY DEAR COLVIN,

Many thanks for your letter and the cutting from the *Westminster Gazette.* I am immensely pleased with it and very proud of that unreserved recognition—and also of having my name put down at the Athenæum with you as proposer.

The only other member of the Athenæum (barring Hugh C[lifford].)

[1] Mrs. Willard.
[2] H. B. Irving.

that I know is Graves. He has always been very friendly to my work and I remember him once going out of his way (I mean literally—in the street) to compliment me warmly on the *Secret Agent* when the novel was first published.

No, my dear Colvin, I meant that you should send *me* the revise sheets of the *S. Line* so that I could have them bound in a spare binding I've got by me; and I meant to reproduce the final corrections (as far as possible) before returning them to you. *That* was the understanding. Pray keep to it if it isn't too late.

It's you, *cher ami,* who have been perfectly delightful during your visit here, leaving with us an impression of freshness and vitality, and that fidelity to early enthusiasms which keeps a man from ever becoming "aged" in the common sense of that word. If I shocked you by flying out against Gambetta I am sorry. He *was* a great man, especially in regard of the other makers of the 3rd Republic. Freycinet, Léon Say, Challemel-Lacour were most distinguished personalities—but rather *hommes de cabinet*. Of the others (with perhaps the exception of the golden-tongued Jew, Jules Simon) the best that can be said is that they were politicians. They are now decently forgotten. But the greatest figure of the times through which we have lived was The People itself, *la Nation*. For 150 years the French people has been always greater (and better) than its leaders, masters and teachers. And the same can be said of the English—indeed it's manifest in what we see to-day. The two great figures of the West! Only the French, perhaps, were more searchingly tried by the lesser stability of their political life. Yet I don't know. The evils which worked amongst us were more insidious in their methods.

Our heartfelt sympathy with dear Lady Colvin in her grief and anxiety and our best love to you both.

P. S. I am an honest person, so seeing at a glance that the shirt wouldn't fit me, I decided with but little hesitation that it should be sent to the owner. I hope you've got it by now. Jessie thanks you for your inquiries. I saw her just now creep painfully across the room and could have cried.

To Christopher Sandeman

Capel House.
[End of April, 1917.]

MY DEAR SANDEMAN,

Merci mille fois. I have started a strong agitation for X. My

adaptateur did not come down but I have dispatched one letter to him and another to my agent. I am very much indebted to you also for the warning against the other woman. I have a secret terror of all actors and (not so much) of actresses since they murdered for me a one-act play I wrote once (off my own bat) and had some illusions about.

I am sending you a short piece of writing of mine [1]—of no particular importance—but Dent insisted on publishing it now; and I had to let him for the sake of peace and quietness. Don't trouble to write, pray, on *that* account.

We are getting good news in so far at least that it breaks up the subtle, deadening effect of stagnation. And I think it is good in itself too.

X . . . , I understand, is a *diplomate de carrière*—which is a great advantage. Perhaps he will be the first *Ministre Polonais à la Cour de St. James*. What you say of the Poles is true enough. But you must remember that in great affairs they have had no experience for generations. In such circumstances natural aptitude will run into *un peu trop de finesse*. We can't expect certain virtues from people conscious of having been regarded for ages as a political nuisance—an insoluble and embarrassing problem.

Absolute sincerity, I begin to think, is not natural to man; it's acquired by a long training in self-confidence. And poor X . . . was not even certain of his backing while he had to speak out. *Enfin!* I hope you are quite well now.

To Miss Catherine Willard

Capel House.
30. 4. 17.

CHÈRE CATHERINE,

I am truly sorry H. B. I.[2] did not do anything. If my health permits I'll run up and go to the Savoy *à votre intention*. Perhaps in a talk with H. B. I. I'll be able to slip a word in. I do feel sorry to be so powerless.

The girls in "Victory" do have some lines to speak. One of them more than the others. *Y pensez-vous?*

And *à propos:* I've signed the agreement. It stipulates performing before the end of the year. That means probably October.

Borys is an impertinent young cub. But then, on the other hand, consider that he must have been meditating on the subject in the crash-

[1] *The Shadow Line.*
[2] H. B. Irving.

ing of shells. That's a sort of compliment. Personally I like your short hair. Always did. But I can't attack him very well; for only think, if it came out that a father and son are quarrelling about your hair, *quel scandale!* So I had better say nothing. You must squash him yourself. Women know how to do that thing almost from babyhood. I remember the squashings I got in my young days. But I must ask you not to be too hard on him. After all, the graceless wretch *is* my son.

Our love to you both.

Votre ami.

To Edward Garnett

[May, 1917.]

DEAREST EDWARD,

The trouble is that I too don't know Russian; I don't even know the alphabet. The truth of the matter is that it is *you* who have opened my eyes to the value and the quality of Turgenev. As a boy I remember reading *Smoke* in a Polish translation (a *feuilleton* of some newspaper) and the *Gentlefolks* in French. I liked those things purely by instinct (a very sound ground, but no starting point for criticism) with which the consciousness of literary perfection had absolutely nothing to do. You opened my mind first to the appreciation of the art. For the rest, Turgenev for me is Constance Garnett and Constance Garnett *is* Turgenev. She has done that marvellous thing of placing the man's work inside English literature and it is there that I see it—or rather that I *feel* it.

Upon the whole I don't see it. If I did see I could talk about it, perhaps to some purpose. As it is, my dear, I wouldn't know how to begin.

As far as I know you are the only man who had seen T. not only in his relation to mankind but in his relation to Russia. And he is great in both. But to be so great and at the same time so fine is fatal to an artist —as to any other man for that matter. It isn't Dostoevski, the grimacing, haunted creature, who is under a curse; it is Turgenev. Every gift has been heaped on his cradle. Absolute sanity and the deepest sensibility, the clearest vision and the most exquisite responsiveness, penetrating insight and unfailing generosity of judgment, and unerring instinct for the significant, for the essential in human life and in the visible world, the clearest mind, the warmest heart, the largest sympathy—and all that in perfect measure! There's enough there to ruin any writer. For you know, my dear Edward, that if you and I were to catch Antinous and exhibit him in a booth of the world's fair, swearing that his life was as

perfect as his form, we wouldn't get one per cent. of the crowd struggling next door to catch sight of the double-headed Nightingale or of some weak-kneed giant grinning through a collar.[1]

I am like you, my dear fellow; broken up—and broken in two—disconnected. Impossible to start myself going, impossible to concentrate to any good purpose. It is the war—perhaps? Or the end of Conrad, simply? I suppose one must end someday, somehow. Mere decency requires it.

But it is very frightful—or frightening. I think the last, rather.

No, my dear fellow, I don't think the short book [2] "unworthy." It's dedicated to the boy. I got the notion into my head you were in Italy. Your copy is here and I am sending it to you now. Of course it's nothing of importance. I wonder what is? I mean of what I have done.

I didn't see the *Nation's* review. I knew it was not written by you, being under the impression that you did cut loose from literature (for a time) and were not in England.

To be frank, I don't want to appear as qualified to speak on things Russian. It wouldn't be true. I admire Turgenev, but, in truth, Russia was for him not more than the canvas for the painter. If his people had all lived in the moon he would have been just as great an artist. They are very much like Shakespeare's Italians. One doesn't think of it.

But, my dear Edward, if you say definitely I've to do it—well, I'll try. I don't promise to bring it off tho'! As I've told you, I don't seem to be able to get hold of anything. The *Shadow Line* was finished in Jan. '15. Since then I just wrote two short stories.[3] Say 12,000 words. I have destroyed a few pages. Very few.

This is the true state of affairs. And it's getting very serious for me too.

I've been gouty and almost continuously laid up since February. I've just got up after the last bout.

Perhaps if you would come down and talk a little, you could wake me up. Who knows? For indeed, my dear, to refuse anything of the kind to you seems intolerable.

Give it a trial. Jessie backs this suggestion with all the force of her affection for you. I will say nothing of mine. You either believe in it—or you don't. I have sometimes wondered . . .

[1] This passage from "It isn't Dostoevski . . ." has been included almost word for word in "Turgenev", a preface for Edward Garnett's book on the Russian novelist. (See *Notes on Life and Letters.*)

[2] *The Shadow Line.*

[1] "A Warrior's Soul" finished in January, and "The Tale," on the 30th October, 1916. These two tales have been included in the posthumous volume, *Tales of Hearsay.*

To Hugh Walpole

Capel House.
18th May, 1917.

DEAR MR. WALPOLE,

It is gratifying to know that a few pages of mine,—and of the sort too for which there seemed to be little justification,—have helped to tide you over the difficult hours that precede the dawn. It appears then that they have not been written in vain.

I had heard of your accident. To fall between a ship and the quay is an abominable experience. I understand it was a very close call too and that you are *"en quelque sorte un revenant."*

Having come back from so far I wonder whether you think it was worth while. I shouldn't like to say positively, chiefly for the reason that owing to my "age and infirmities" I am so completely out of it. A very hard fate this, I can assure you. But speaking generally, I think that decidedly—yes, it is always worth while. One gets a sort of moral satisfaction out of it. I suppose you'll smile,—and to be quite candid with you, I don't know myself very well what I mean by it. But, that is what I feel. And I am not an idealist either. My hopes are of a strictly limited kind. And yet . . .

I have been (like a sort of dismal male witch) peering (mentally), into the caldron into which *la force des choses* has plunged you bodily. What will come out of it? A very subtle poison or some very rough-tested Elixir of Life? Or neither? Just mere *kvass,* so to speak. It's very curious. I feel startled when I remember that my foster-brother is an Ukranian peasant. He is probably alive yet. What does he think? I am afraid that what he thinks bodes no good to the boys and girls with whom I used to play and to their children. Are those gracious Shades of my memory to turn into blood-stained Spectres? *C'est possible, vous savez.* And those houses where, under a soul-crushing oppression, so much noble idealism, chivalrous traditions, the sanity and the amenities of Western civilization were so valiantly preserved,—are they to vanish into smoke? *Cela aussi est très possible.* And at any rate moral destruction is unavoidable. Meantime I have been asked to join in public ecstasies of joy.[1] I begged to be excused. *Le monde est bête.* It is a positive fact.

[1] About the revolution in Russia.

To Mrs. Sanderson

Capel House.
[1917.]

MY DEAR HELEN,

Jessie will be writing to you in a day or two, but meantime I want to tell you how much I appreciate the kind things you say about the *S. Line*. Strangely enough, you know, I never either meant or "felt" the supernatural aspect of the story while writing it. It came out somehow and my readers pointed it out to me. I must tell you that it is a piece of as strict autobiography as the form allowed,—I mean, the need of slight dramatization to make the thing actual. Very slight. For the rest, not a fact or sensation is "invented." What did worry me in reality was not the "supernatural" character, but the *fact* of Mr. Burns's craziness. For only think: my first command, a sinister, slowly developing situation from which one couldn't see any issue that one could *try for:* and the only man on board (second in command) to whom I could open my mind, not quite sane,—not to be depended on for any sort of moral support. It was very trying. I'll never forget those days.

I hope that dear Jan [1] will be comfortable in his first ship. You are right. The naval training has a peculiar quality, and forms a very fine type. For one thing, it is strictly methodized to a very definite end which is noble in itself and of a very high idealistic nature, while on its technical side it deals with a body of systematized facts which cannot be questioned as to their value, which cannot be discussed apart from their reality,—say, on the ground of personal taste, for instance. That steadies the young intelligence and faces it with life, not as it is written about but as it actually is. Last year I saw many naval officers from Admirals to Sub-lieutenants and I have noticed that the Navy thinks rightly on all questions. I don't say this in the sense of the Navy thinking as I do. But whatever conclusion a naval officer arrives at, even if distasteful to me, I can't help recognizing that he arrives at it on sound grounds, making use of his intelligence, and not by way of petty prejudices or ignorant assumptions. I was at sea for 10 days and coming on shore I went into a couple of drawing rooms and one or two newspaper offices; and what I heard there made painful contrast. Borys is well and absolutely serene. Please tell dear Ted that he is very much what he was when Ted saw him and approved of him in Rye. One of the greatest pleasures I had in my life.

Our dear love to you all.

Your affectionate friend and servant.

[1] The son of Mr. and Mrs. E. L. Sanderson.

To John Galsworthy

Capel House.
3rd Sept., 1917.

DEAREST JACK,

This [1] is a gripping piece of writing. I got as far as p. 47 before it dawned on me that these were marvellous opening pages. The others are not less so. My dearest Jack, they are a sheer delight to read from line to line in their ampleness and in their detail, and in the quiet sense of mastery that pervades them and is profoundly satisfying to the mind,—which never for a moment is left in doubt. And thus there is nothing in the slightest degree to check the feeling which from first to last and all the time is with you,—the artist,—and therefore with your creation and all its scenes, great and small.

I wonder what the reception will be. This is almost the only one,—at any rate the one *big* thing of yours—which has no public life. All that is *de la vie intime,*—it may even be called "secret life." And even the only way the outside world acts on her is by the few words overheard at the ball,—forcing on, as it were, the enlightening conversation with the Major. But that already is of the *intime* order. It's very curious. It is a profound study of a personality, but I imagine that 99% of the critics won't see its wide connections. The girl will dominate them. Strange that one should think of her always as a girl that one has known in the early days and then hear her story with the utmost sympathy, some sadness and a profound conviction that it had to be.

I could write pages about facts and persons that are all without exception worthy of you and most searchingly lighted up by your particular Galsworthy rays. Aren't they good! The Major is absolutely wonderful. However, you must trust my word that I haven't missed anything. *Très fort, tout ça.* I haven't been so delighted for I don't know how long.

P. S. I have seen your most charming article on the French in the *Fortnightly.*[2]

To Christopher Sandeman

Capel House
15th Sept., 1917.

MY DEAR SANDEMAN,

I don't know what you think of me by now. The fact, however, is, for what it is worth, that for weeks on end I could not use my right

[1] *Beyond,* by John Galsworthy.
[2] "France 1916–1917" in *The Fortnightly Review,* September, 1917.

hand; and my mentality has grown so feeble that the simple idea of asking my wife to drop you a line has never occurred to me. Perhaps you thought I was dead? I am forwarding you this proof to the contrary with mixed feelings. This is as near as I dare to give you a hint of them.

Je me demande what on earth one can write to a friend in these times? A speechless stare would about meet the situation, but one can't send that in a letter. And words somehow die on one's lips. Well, at any rate, I can tell you that I rejoice to know that your health is improving, or at least tending that way. I am no longer elastic; so, though I can use my hand, I remain flattened out as before. I can't even produce a bitter smile at the Russian antics; and as to the phraseology of the Press, that has ceased to amuse me a long time ago. My store of cynicism is exhausted. The democratic bawlings of our statesmen at Mme Germania would be dull enough, if history were a comic libretto. But one somehow can't look at it in that way—tho' I believe, in the Victorian Age, a literary man of liberal conditions wrote a comic History of England. That was in the days of the Manchester School; but the days through which we live would make Stupidity itself pause.

Do send me a line of forgiveness with news of your health.

To Sir Sidney Colvin

Capel House.
12th Nov., Monday, 1917.

MY DEAR COLVIN,

This morning on opening my eyes I saw the noble vol. delicately deposited by my side, while I slept, by Jessie's instructions; and now after reading the preface and looking at the illustrations I sit down *en robe de chambre* and *pantoufles* to thank you for the copy, for the inscription, and for your invariable friendship in letters and in life, and, in association with dear Lady Colvin, extended to my nearest and dearest on earth.

You have been very much in my thoughts of late, for I can feel with you (and for you) in the present posture of Italian affairs. This morning Gibbon's corr^ce^ in the *D[aily] C[hronicle]* is very reserved. For me there seems nothing possible but the Brenta-Astico line, the first river-position which is not liable to be outflanked from the north. It's true that Venice would be then on the right of the front, but the allied squadrons could cover it efficiently, and in any case the brunt of the enemy's attack could not be delivered along the seashore, where our heavy naval guns would come into play. I don't know anything about the state of water in

both these rivers. It is no doubt torrential and variable; but the mere river-bed is an advantage in front of a solidly occupied position. The Adige line would give us too much all at once, it seems to me; and then (one hates to write it) in case of further reverse on the Brenta there would be *that* to fall back on.—I have been fearing this for the last 3 months. I told Borys when he was here in Sept. It seems to me that a blind man could have seen that these people were hanging on by their eyebrows in the north. As to treachery, I simply don't believe in it. Cadorna spoke in the bitterness of his heart—unreasonably. It was a purely military defeat. And that can be retrieved. It is moral rottenness that is unretrievable. But I can't believe that an army, who had gone through a most arduous campaign with credit and had just won a notable success, could go suddenly rotten in patches—like this. An army is not a parliament. Italians are not Russians who (nobody would believe me in 1914)are born rotten. Of course it is a great blow. We shall telephone to you our arrival in town, which may be this week. Our dear love to your home.

To Mr. and Mrs. E. L. Sanderson

[London]
31st Dec., '17.

MY DEAR HELEN AND TED,

Our warmest New Year wishes to you, to dear Ted and to your children near and far.

Ever since that evening when I was so unfortunately out when you called, I've been more or less laid up with gout, decorated with bronchial symptoms—a very artistic specimen indeed. And I am thoroughly sick of it. I daren't put my nose outside the door; and my fine projects of haunting the "Elstree School" doorstep seem but mad dreams to my sobered fancy.

And all through it, with groans and imprecations, I have been working every morning. You can imagine what sort of stuff that is. No colour, no relief, no tonality; the thinnest possible squeaky bubble. And when I've finished with it, I shall go out and sell it in a market place for 20 times the money I had for the *Nigger,* 30 times the money I had for the *Mirror of the Sea.*

It is a horrible prospect. And because I have not enough satanism in my nature I can't enjoy it. I am really a much more decent person than you would think. It's a great disadvantage.

I don't know why I've told you all this; but I feel better for it. Our dear love to you all. Remember me specially to Jan.

A young Naval Officer has just been to see me with a fine story, a fight with a submarine. They bagged the beast after a twenty-minutes action.

Ever yours in heart and mind.

To Mrs. Dummett

4c Hyde Park Mansions,
Marylebone Road, N. W.
31 Dec., 1917.

DEAR MRS. DUMMETT,

Our best wishes for the New Year,—as far as one dares to formulate wishes in those years of never-ending deceptions.

As I have no doubt that don Roberto [1] will appear *chez vous* to-morrow with his felicitations, will you please give him from us his share of these timid but sincere good wishes and the assurance of our great affection?

My *Nostromo* is to re-appear in Jany; don't be surprised if you have to wait a little for your copy. I am having it specially bound for you and I apprehend there will be the usual "war-time" delay in that as in other things.

I must thank you for the special pleasure you gave me that day I lunched at your house. I didn't say anything then, being intimidated by W. L. George and W. L. George's wife. But I was delighted to hear that you liked my last story in the *Between the Tides* vol:—I mean the story about Anne.[2] I have been much abused for it,—privately and publicly—and your words were like dew in the desert: for I too have a weakness for that story.

Since, I had no opportunity to speak to you. When you called the other day, I was much grieved at not being presentable. Don Roberto talking of Colombia and other things was perfectly delightful. I hope he got rid of the cough which was tormenting him.

Directly I am fit again to appear amongst my fellowmen I shall come *vous saluer chez vous,* and perhaps may bring the book with me. Till then I remain as always your most faithful and obedient friend and servant.

[1] R. B. Cunninghame Graham.

[2] "Because of the Dollars," in the volume *Within the Tides.*

To Hugh Walpole

4c Hyde Park Mansions.
30 Jan., 1918.

DEAR MR. WALPOLE,

Nostromo left for Bury Street this afternoon, 3 hours before your letter arrived.

This is decisive.

Yes. Do come. As late as you like and stay to supper,—*un repas quelconque,*—if you can. As Flesh and Fowl are uncertain nowadays, it will be probably Red Herring. The plates'll be chipped in true camp style.

Pray drop us a line on account of the "Missus," who will naturally want to disguise that Herring for the occasion.

To S. A. Everitt

Capel House.
Feb. 18th, 1918.

N. B.
It is understood that the contents of this letter are not for publicity in the daily or weekly press, but only for the use of Messrs D. P. & Co. travellers.

DEAR MR. EVERITT,

Many thanks for your friendly letter received to-day, which I answer at once.

No. Mr. Doubleday never talked to me of your business and publicity arrangements, but I quite understand. I am very willing indeed to accede to your request, except as to the specimen pages. No one sees my manuscript till it is ready for the printer. A specimen page is nothing. A piece of literature is not a bag of wheat and I should think that in the case of a writer of my standing as an artist, even the very booksellers ought to feel a certain amount of confidence as to the character of the wares they are going to receive.

The title of the book [1] is another point on which I can give you no

[1] *The Arrow of Gold.*

information, for the reason that, so far, I don't know it myself. It was like this with *Victory*. I didn't hit upon that title till the very end; and the word itself was the very last written of all the MS. I had thought of many titles before, but I am very glad I waited for what, you cannot deny, was a true inspiration. And thus it is in this case. Lots of titles pass through my head (in my idle moments—which are few) but not one of them gives me the exact feeling of rightness. If it had been a book in French I believe I would have called it *L'Amie du Roi,* but as in English (The Friend of the King) the gender is not indicated by the termination, I can't very well do that. People would think perhaps of a friend with a great beard and that would be a great mistake. The title of *The Goatherd,* which would have been possible too, is open to the same objection. They would be both a little misleading, because the connection of the story both with goats and kings is very slender. *Two Sisters* would be a title much more closely related to the facts, but I don't like it. It's too precise and also too commonplace. On the other hand, *Mme de Lastaola* is foreign in appearance, besides looking pretentious. *The Heiress,* which is closest to the facts, would be the most misleading of all; and it is also very unimaginative and stupid. We must wait for the title to come by itself.

As you see, the above are all connected with a woman. And indeed the novel may be best described as the Study of a Woman who might have been a very brilliant phenomenon but has remained obscure, playing her little part in the Carlist war of '75–6 and then going as completely out of the very special world which knew her as though she had returned in despair to the goats of her childhood in some lonely valley on the south slope of the Pyrenees. The book, however, is but slightly concerned with her public (so to speak) activity, which was really of a secret nature. What it deals with is her private life: her sense of her own position, her sentiments and her fears. It is really an episode, related dramatically and in the detailed manner of a study, in that particular life. That it is also an episode in the general experience of the young narrator (the book is written in the first person) serves only to round it off and give it completeness as a novel. The narrative is divided into four parts, each part containing three or four long chapters. There will be something of Paris in it, and something of the sea, but the actual milieu of the story is the town of Marseilles. The colouring is Southern. However, all the interest is in the personages. Of these, two women and four men play an active part, the others being only mentioned in the narrative, which, I want to tell you, is dealing with facts and not at all with self-analysis and psychology.

Of the artistic purpose of the writing I won't say anything: it is a matter between myself, my conscience and my critics. But I am confi-

dent that an experienced and intelligent American bookseller, allowed to see what I have written to you here, would be able to form a pretty clear notion of what he would have to deal with in handling the book. In length it will be shorter than *Victory*. What we might call a medium-sized novel.

P. S. Yes. I've seen "Contact's" work. It is very good. But he's not the only one.

To Allan Wade

Capel House.
15. 3. 18.

MY DEAR MR. WADE,

I wonder whether this reminder will catch you? For all I know you may be at the gate this moment—for I suppose you've not forgotten us, though no doubt we have grown shadowy, as real people will do. It is only stage personages that keep their outline unblurred. Apparently art is mightier than life.

And you too are a shadow! But don't vanish—don't! It would be unkind, to say the least of it.

I feel extremely shadowy to myself—I mean the Conrad of the London days. There is a great silence around me here—in which I am listening for the rustle of your shadowy footsteps. Send us a line of ghostly handwriting soon.

To Mrs. E. L. Sanderson

Capel House.
April 20th, 1918.

DEAREST HELEN,

Your report of what poor Ted has got to go through is appalling. Those cures are atrocious things, but what you describe is more like a procedure of the Middle Ages, when medical men treated their patients with ruthless ferocity strangely in accord with the spirit of the time. Whether the spirit of our time is less ferocious, one may well doubt. It's a despairing reflection. We hope with all our hearts that dear Ted's tortures will benefit him in the end.

The last f. p. c. we had from Borys is dated on the 14th. During the first days of the German attack I lived in an agony of apprehension, for

I knew that his battery was in the very thickest of things, its position being near Holnon Wood. At last a few lines arrived dated the 13th and we knew that he was neither killed nor wounded nor mopped up by the Germans in the first rush. The battery too had been pulled safely out of that mortal scrimmage and the boy was very much pleased with his work and very enthusiastic about his own particular men, who, he tells us, "performed miracles." It was rather bad luck for him to have been transferred from the 3rd to the 5th Army only last September. When on his last leave, he was very uneasy about what was coming and was obviously anxious about the position of the battery to which he is attached. I don't think that anything that has happened, unless perhaps his own escape unscathed, was a matter of surprise to him. But it's no use dwelling upon these things.

Jessie who sends her dear love to you both is suffering a great deal of pain, but she remains hopeful and on the whole well enough in health. I've got a gouty thumb but I am working. I really don't understand how I manage it, but I do. It's probably rubbish. Oh, yes. You shall see me in May and I hope you won't call the police to remove me till after a decent interval.

My dear Helen, my heart is like lead. I don't think I had many illusions from the first; but this is so different even from a mere half of what one was led to expect.

Love to you both and pray give my love to Ted's charming secretary and my thanks for her private line in Ted's letter, and my love to the other two dears when you write.

Ever your affectionate friend and servant.

To (Sir) Edmund Gosse

Capel House.
1st May, '18.

DEAR MR. GOSSE,

My warmest thanks for the inscribed copy which arrived yesterday. The first time I read the book [1] was in 1908, the last was in '12 or early in '13, when the copy disappeared,—as books will vanish from the best regulated households: especially books that are often depended upon at any hour and almost in every mood of the reader.

Directly the little, friendly-looking volume was put in my hands yesterday afternoon I read,—*toute affaire cessante,*—the Introduction and the first 15 pp., where there are passages for which I have a special

[1] *Father and Son.*

affection: such as the opening paragraph striking the first clear and touching note of the work, and the one where the walls of the little house containing these exalted lives are being opened above to the "uttermost heavens."

On my return from town I had to go to bed for 48 hours. I am always being laid by the heels in this wearisome manner. It was only on Monday that I could write to my agent to find me a copy of my *Reminiscences* [1] (*ce titre-là est bête*) in a *good* condition. This may take a little time. There was only one edition of, I believe, a thousand only. I need not tell you how pleased and indeed touched I was by your asking for that particular book. I've always had and shall keep to my last day a very vivid sense of your invariably generous appreciation of my work.

To Barrett H. Clark

Capel House.
May 4th, 1918.

DEAR MR. CLARK,

No. I am not continually besieged by the sort of correspondence you have in mind. I will admit that what there is of it is for the most part fatuous and not at all like your communication, which, by its matter and still more by its friendly tone, has given me great pleasure. You must not mind me answering it on a typewriter, as on account of the state of my wrist the handling of the pen just now is a matter of difficulty.

You are right in thinking that I would be gratified by the appreciation of a mind younger than my own. But in truth I don't consider myself an Ancient. My writing life extends but only over twenty-three years, and I need not point out to an intelligence as alert as yours that all that time has been a time of evolution, in which some critics have detected three marked periods—and that the process is still going on. Some critics have found fault with me for not being constantly myself. But they are wrong. I am always myself. I am a man of formed character. Certain conclusions remain immovably fixed in my mind, but I am no slave to prejudices and formulas, and I shall never be. My attitude to subjects and expressions, the angles of vision, my methods of composition will, within limits, be always changing—not because I am unstable or unprincipled but because I am free. Or perhaps it may be more exact to say, because I am always trying for freedom—within my limits.

Coming now to the subject of your inquiry, I wish at first to put be-

[1] *Some Reminiscences,* first title of *A Personal Record.*

fore you a general proposition: that a work of art is very seldom limited to one exclusive meaning and not necessarily tending to a definite conclusion. And this for the reason that the nearer it approaches art, the more it acquires a symbolic character. This statement may surprise you, who may imagine that I am alluding to the Symbolist School of poets or prose writers. Theirs, however, is only a literary proceeding against which I have nothing to say. I am concerned here with something much larger. But no doubt you have meditated on this and kindred questions yourself.

So I will only call your attention to the fact that the symbolic conception of a work of art has this advantage, that it makes a triple appeal covering the whole field of life. All the great creations of literature have been symbolic, and in that way have gained in complexity, in power, in depth and in beauty.

I don't think you will quarrel with me on the ground of lack of precision; for as to precision of images and analysis my artistic conscience is at rest. I have given there all the truth that is in me; and all that the critics may say can make my honesty neither more nor less. But as to "final effect" my conscience has nothing to do with that. It is the critic's affair to bring to its contemplation his own honesty, his sensibility and intelligence. The matter for his conscience is just his judgment. If his conscience is busy with petty scruples and trammelled by superficial formulas then his judgment will be superficial and petty. But an artist has no right to quarrel with the inspirations, either lofty or base, of another soul.

Of course, your interpretation of *Victory's* final aim, of its artistic secret as it were, is correct; and indeed I must say that I did not wrap it up in very mysterious processes of art. I made my appeal to feelings in as clear a language as I can command; and I don't think there is a critic in England or France who was in any doubt about it. In one or two instances the book was attacked on grounds which I simply cannot understand. Other criticisms struck me by their acuteness in the analysis of method and language. Some readers frankly did not like the book; but not on the ground of irony. And yet irony is not altogether absent from those pages, which, I am glad to think, have not failed to move your feelings and imagination. Pray accept this long screed as a warm acknowledgment of your sympathy with my work. With my best wishes for your success in the life of your choice.

To Hugh Walpole

Capel House.
June 7th, 1918.

MY DEAR WALPOLE,

I want to thank you at once for the little book and to tell you that I am profoundly touched by many things you have found it possible in your heart and conscience to say about my work. The only thing that grieves me and makes me dance with rage is the cropping up of the legend set afloat by Hugh Clifford about my hesitation between English and French as a writing language. For it is absurd. When I wrote the first words of *Almayer's Folly,* I had been already for years and years *thinking* in English. I began to think in English long before I mastered, I won't say the style (I haven't done that yet), but the mere uttered speech. Is it thinkable that anybody possessed of some effective inspiration should contemplate for a moment such a frantic thing as translating it into another tongue? And there are also other considerations: such as the sheer appeal of the language, my quickly awakened love for its prose cadences, a subtle and unforeseen accord of my emotional nature with its genius. To that last, my dear Walpole, you bear witness yourself in your critical sketch or I have misunderstood you completely! You may take it from me that if I had not known English I wouldn't have written a line for print, in my life. C[lifford] and I were discussing the nature of the two languages and what I said was: that if I had been offered the alternative I would have been afraid to grapple with French, which is crystallized in the form of its sentence and therefore more exacting and less appealing. But there was never any alternative offered or even dreamed of. Somehow C. transformed a general remark into a personal statement.

Another matter of fact.

You say that I have been under the formative influence of *Madame Bovary*. In fact, I read it only after finishing *A. F.*,[1] as I did all the other works of Flaubert, and anyhow, my Flaubert is the Flaubert of *St. Antoine* and *Ed[ucation]: Sent[imentale]:* and that only from the point of view of the rendering of concrete things and visual impressions. I thought him marvellous in that respect. I don't think I learned anything from him. What he did for me was to open my eyes and arouse my emulation. One can learn something from Balzac, but what could one learn from Flaubert? He compels admiration,—about the greatest service one artist can render to another.

[1] *Almayer's Folly.*

The tale of the *Arrow* is finished. There are only the preliminary and the final Notes to write: for it is going to be specifically and by declaration on the title page, "A Story between Two Notes."

It is quite on the cards that we will come to London next week. Something will have to be done with Jessie's knee at once. The thing is become impossible. I am considerably worried about the immediate future in this and other respects.

Thank you for your inquiry after the boy. Yesterday we had a letter dated the 3rd. He is doing Captain's duty with his battery, that officer being now on leave in England. The boy seems to like it, but he confesses the strain of waiting is becoming almost unbearable. Still he is with men, superiors and inferiors, whom he positively loves and trusts, and so, if it must come to that, it will be easier to die in their company.

Affectionately yours.

To J. B. Pinker

Capel House.
Sept. 25th, 1918.

MY DEAR PINKER,

Thank you very much for your two letters.

I am glad to hear that Eric is well and in good spirits. All good luck to him. The stoppage of leave looks as though we intended to push on our advantage without respite. That indeed is the right spirit for this job. It looks indeed as if out there we were out of the wood at last. It is at home that I can't help feeling that we are still in the dark about the truth of the situation. Those strikes are really inexcusable and seem to me either the result of moral blindness or of a very sinister recklessness of purpose, strangely un-English—at least, as I have understood the character of Englishmen in the past. It may be simply a lack of imagination, a kind of stupidity, but it's hard to believe that it is nothing else but that. And anyhow, stupidity or wickedness, the consequences will be equally deplorable unless good sense or repentance come to the rescue.

I am sorry to say that things are not at all well with Jessie. The state of the joint has taken a decided turn for the worse, I mean apart from the condition of the wound itself, which in one place still refuses to heal for no reason that our doctor here can discover. But it is the internal state of the joint that gives cause for anxiety. There is a return of pain and mysterious swellings which must be caused by some source of mischief inside. It is the bitterest sort of disappointment.

I have been talking with our doctor this moment. He says that it is

no use waiting any longer, as three months have now elapsed since the operation and the state of the joint is apparently worse now than it was when she first arrived here. She must be taken up to London to be seen by both surgeons who operated: Aitken and Sir Robert Jones. Sir R. is expected from Italy on Monday, as Mrs. Watson, his daughter, writes us. Aitken of course is in London. I am writing to the Nursing Home to-day to retain a room for Jessie as from Thursday Oct. 3rd., which is the earliest date they can give me. Under the best conditions this means a week in town. I propose that Miss Hallowes [1] and myself should stay at the Norfolk, which is both near your office and the Temple station from which I can get round easily to Baker St., which is very near the Home; so that even if I am lame I can manage to go and see Jessie with very little actual walking.

As to the work which I must and want to do—a small hotel room at the Norfolk is not a very good place for it, but I thought that for a few days you would perhaps let me have Eric's room from about ten till one if you are not making any special use of it; but I beg you to be quite frank with me if you don't like the idea of what, after all, would be an intrusion on your business premises. I won't say anything more just now as I am really very upset by this unlucky development with its attendant anxiety and expense.

Your suggestion for developing the Polish episode is helpful and I would accept it at once if it weren't for the thought that I could hardly avoid in that case touching on the political side of the present situation, which I am very shy of doing, both in regard to its effect in this country and also in Poland, where everything I write does make its way. It may be an absurd shrinking, but there it is. I don't offer writing a short story for two reasons which you will understand very well. First because it would be comparatively a long job, and next because it will take me too much out of the mood for *The Rescue,* which I have been cultivating most earnestly for the last six weeks and have in a measure attained now. Three newspaper contributions of three or four thousand words in all are not open to those objections. You know me too well not to see at once the point of this argument. Meantime, till we leave here next week I intend to stick to *The Rescue* exclusively. After all every page of that is money too—only not immediate. Pray drop me a line to say you are not utterly sick of me and my disasters, which always come to roost on your shoulders.

[1] Joseph Conrad's secretary.

To Thomas J. Wise

Norfolk Hotel
Surrey Street, Strand.
2. 10. 1918.

DEAR MR. WISE,

Thank you very much for your friendly letter enclosing the check. It is very delightful for me to think that the possession of the MS. is a matter giving you so much satisfaction. As Mr. Jean-Aubry may have told you, Mr. John Quinn of New York possesses all the series of my manuscripts of the books which have been already published. Some of these MSS. being mere fragments, others complete and in a good state. You, however, are now in possession of the MS. of a novel that certainly will not be published till 1920.

This MS. also holds a special position in so far that it is the only one which has a history extending over twenty years.[1] Begun in 1896 as my third planned novel, it was laid aside finally at the end of '99, so that a whole pile of pages belongs wholly to the Nineteenth Century. The preservation of those pages I owe certainly to my wife, who insisted on keeping them in one of her drawers long after I lost all interest in the MS. as MS., for several typed copies have been taken of it, each introducing changes and alterations till this last (I believe the 4th) typed copy on which I am working now, and I intend to finish the tale by dictating. Thus you will understand that there will be no further pen and ink pages. The first complete state of the novel will be a typed copy bearing pen and ink corrections and alterations.

Though I suppose John Quinn would like to have it and indeed may be said to have a moral claim on it, I will, if you at all care for it, reserve it for you, so that you should have the very last as well as the very first of the conception and execution of *The Rescue*. The two texts side by side may form a literary curiosity showing the modifications of my judgment, of my taste, and also of my style during the 20 years covering almost the whole writing period of my life.

As soon as my wrist becomes less painful I will write for you an extended note on the history of the MS., accounting shortly for the reason of its having been laid aside for so long.

[1] The MS. of *The Rescuer*, the first and unpublished version of *The Rescue*.

To Christopher Sandeman

Capel House.
Oct. 17, 1918.

MY DEAR SANDEMAN,

I was delighted to receive your letter from Seville. It was eleven days on the way. This helps me to realize that feeling of moral remoteness from the world and its war which you describe to me.

I am not surprised to hear of our improved standing in the view of the Spanish people. Nothing succeeds like success. Mankind is made that way. Neither am I surprised to hear that our sympathizers, as distinguished from partisans, have not increased. But I must say that the general attitude towards Spain here is by no means resentful. The economic difficulties are well understood and the pro-Teutonic character of the Spanish press is simply ascribed to German money. Not very complimentary for the press: but the nation as a whole is not associated with it.

Somehow an air of mystery hangs upon the clearest utterances, like a cloud over an open landscape. The force behind these plain words is immense. Immense in every sense. The fact is that the mind uttering these momentous declarations is a non-European mind; and we, old Europeans, with a long and bitter experience behind us of realities and illusions, can't help wondering as to the exact value of words expressing these great intentions.

I will say no more of this. Time will show. And it is very possible that if this letter were to turn up in fifty years' time, it would appear very foolish to its discoverer. It is very possible also that he would not understand it at all. But I am sure you understand what I mean—and so enough of this.

I have been distressingly gouty all this year, but I managed to finish a novel. The news from our boy is good. He is now with Plumer in Flanders and I suppose, in a sense, enjoying himself. This letter is typed because my gouty wrist hurts so much when I write that a few lines is all that I can do. All luck to your play in its Spanish dress. We must, my dear Sandeman, see each other when you return. You have been much in my thoughts—tho' as to letter-writing I behave abominably to my friends—not excepting you.

À vous affectueusement.

To Sir Sidney Colvin

Capel House
11. Nov., 1918, 11.30. A. M.

MY DEAR COLVIN,

Just a word on this historic date to ask how you are and to tell you all is fairly well with us. The patrol airship has just gone home from his beat—not needed any more! His usual hour was seven in the evening. The bells in the village are ringing; and we two sit here soberly thankful for the end, giving our thoughts to those homes where no losses can be made up, and our gratitude to those who will never return. It is indeed a solemn day. The great sacrifice is accomplished, bringing with it a thrill of wonder and awe at the inscrutable ways of mankind on this earth.

We have had a letter from B[orys] this morning. He is in Havre still, awaiting his Medical Board. I imagine they will give him sick leave now. Of course, there is a lot yet for the Army to do, but no doubt the numbers will be rapidly reduced.

My love to Lady Colvin.

To Hugh Walpole

Capel House.
11 Nov., '18

DEAR WALPOLE,

A word on this great day to take part in the sober joy you must feel. The great sacrifice is consummated,—and what will come of it to the nations of earth the future will show.

I cannot confess to an easy mind. Great and very blind forces are set free catastrophically all over the world. This only I know, that if we are called upon to restore order in Europe (as it may well be) then we shall be safe, at home too. To me the call is already manifest,—but it may be declined on idealistic or political grounds. It is a question of courage in the leaders, who are never as good as the people.

We are thankful to know you are better. I shall try to see you in the course of this week. I imagine you'll be still interned in your flat on Thursday.

Affectionately yours.

To J. B. Pinker

Capel House.
[End 1918]

MY DEAR PINKER,

I quite understand that people cannot be expected to buy a pig in a poke, but I submit that buying a Conrad work is not exactly that; and that the style, character and trend of the tale can be sufficiently seen from the MS. in the state it is now.

I may also point out that the New York *Herald,* seven or eight years ago, was not afraid to begin printing before *Chance* was finished. I mention this fact because the N. Y. *H.* is certainly a very American paper, with a large public, and I have no reason to think that they regretted it.

Much as I would be pleased to appear in the *Cosmopolitan,* I am afraid I can do nothing in the way of a rush; and as to any sort of synopsis of events, apart from the difficulty—I would have to give an abbreviated account—I am afraid it would be of no help because the interest of that romance is all in the shades of the psychology of the people engaged, as is obvious from the four parts already completed.[1] It is sustained by the presentation alone. You may however assure the representative of the *Cosmopolitan Magazine* that the story will end as romantically as it began, and that no one of any particular consequence will have to die. Hassim and Immada will be sacrificed, as in any case they were bound to be, but their fate is not the subject of the tale. All those yacht people will go on their way, leaving Lingard alone with the wreck of the greatest adventure of his life. For indeed what else could have happened? Any tragedy there is in this *dénouement* will be all in the man's feelings; and whatever value there may be in that, must depend on the success of the romantic presentation. This statement, I have the right to hope, will be enough for the mature mind which directs the editorial department of the *Cosmopolitan Magazine.* There are many kinds of romance and this one is not fit for juvenile readers, not because it raises any sort of problem but on account of the depth and complexity of the feelings involved in the action, which in itself does not aim at any great originality and can be pretty well foreseen from the beginning.

[1] *The Rescue.* It was serialized in America, not in the *Cosmopolitan Magazine,* but in *Romance* (November, 1919–May, 1920).

To F. N. Doubleday

Capel House.
Dec. 21st, 1918.

DEAR MR. DOUBLEDAY,

I was just thinking of writing to Garden City when I heard of your arrival in this country. I am very glad that your presence here may give us an opportunity to meet each other after the holidays. I would have come up of course to see you, as I fear that, with your many important engagements, it will be impossible for you to give us the pleasure of receiving you under our roof here this time; but in any case I will be under the necessity of bringing my wife to London in the course of the next month, probably for another operation, the one performed on her knee in June last not having entirely answered our expectations. All the year 1918 has been passed in endeavours to relieve her from her crippled state and I have had rather an anxious time in consequence.

It didn't, however, prevent me, as you know, from finishing a novel, about which I had lately a very appreciative letter from a member of your staff. It was extremely pleasant. But all the communications I receive from Garden City are extremely pleasant, though they are generally signed each by a different name. Mr. Saxton's signature is the only one I saw more than once; but I believe he is no longer with you.

The Arrow of Gold is a subject which I had in my mind for some eighteen years, but which I hesitated to take up till now. This state of mind may to an American appear very dilatory and ineffectual; and I won't attempt to apologize for my opinion that work is not to be rushed at simply because it can be done or because one suffers from mere impatience to do it. A piece of work of any sort is only fully justified when it is done at the right time; just as the potentiality and the energy of a fire-brigade is only justified when a house is on fire. To rush out and deluge the citizens' houses with streams of water simply because the pumps are new, the organization perfect and a laudable energy must have an outlet, would be an absurd proceeding and, very likely, give serious offence to the reasonable part of the public. Some feeling like this, just as strong but of a different order, has restrained me. But having found the mood, I didn't tarry much on my way, having finished that novel in about ten months. This for a piece of creation depending so much for its truth on actual brush-strokes, one may say, is rather a short time; especially as it was also an essay, I won't say in a new technique (there is nothing new under the sun) but in a method of presentation which was a new departure in J. C.'s art—if such a thing as J. C.'s personal art exists. I wouldn't like to have to demonstrate this in set terms; but some people say that it does exist.

You have too much knowledge of human nature not to understand after what I have said, that I feel a particular interest in that book, which is so much of a portraiture of vanished years, of feelings, that had once their actuating power, and of people who probably are all at rest by now. I am sufficient of a democrat to detest the idea of being a writer of any "coterie" of some small self-appointed aristocracy in the vast domain of art or letters. As a matter of feeling—not as a matter of business—I want to be read by many eyes and by all kinds of them, at that. I pride myself that there is no sentence of my writing, either thought or image, that is not accessible, I won't say to the meanest intelligence (meanness is a matter of temperament rather) but to the simplest intelligence that is aware at all of the world in which we live. Therefore I will confess without shame that the failure in serializing the *Arrow of Gold* has affected me to a certain extent. The question of what is or is not fit for publication reduces itself, when all is said and done, to the single point of "suspended interest." That, I judge, is the "master-quality" of a serial; and it is not always to be obtained by the mere multiplicity of episodes. One single episode out of a life, one single feeling combined with a certain form of action (you'll notice I say *action* not analysis) may give the quality of "suspended interest" to the tale of one single adventure in which the deepest sensations (and not only the bodies) of the actors are involved.

I put this point of view with some diffidence before a man eminently successful in those forms of human activity that deal with mankind in the mass. I may be wrong. I think, however, that I was right in the objections I raised against the proposal to publish *A. of G.* in book form in January. First of all, it seemed to me that, at the date the proposal reached me, there was not enough time left to make the business and publicity arrangements for a novel by J. C., whose merit is not of that kind that could secure a response without all the help that the standing, influence and organization of Doubleday, Page & Co. can give him. I also doubted the advisability of publishing a book at a time when, for the next three months or more, the public mind is bound to be absorbed by the problems of peace and the settling of political questions all over the world. Besides, I felt that in justice to myself, and also to your efforts on my behalf, I must see the proof sheets; not for material alteration, but for the exact setting of the text. I felt this the more because your printers would be setting up from a typewritten copy which I myself had not seen, but which, I am sure, contains the usual amount of errors and mistakes of a kind that cannot be easily discovered by the most conscientious of proof readers. I am perfectly aware that I had no book proofs from you for the previous books, but this was only because

then the setting up at Garden City was done from printed texts which were already carefully revised by me.

The Rescue is approaching completion and I believe that the last words will be written before the end of January. The serialization of that story will be another problem in which, if opportunity offers, I feel I can count upon your assistance.

I hear that it is your intention to come to some agreement with Mr. Wm. Heinemann as to the publication in England of a certain proportion of the "limited edition" which has been held in suspense during the war. Nothing would give me greater pleasure than to see the English issue in Mr. Heinemann's hands. I have preserved a very vivid sense of that firm's friendly attitude towards my earlier work. They did everything that was possible to give a chance to the *Nigger of the "Narcissus"*—a pretty hopeless book at that time; and later, when I failed in my engagement to them, they treated me with a delicate consideration which I am not likely ever to forget.

My wife sends her most friendly regards. She charges me to say that she is glad you have found support in that friendship and devotion which give to the life of a man of action its greatest value. I need not say that I associate myself warmly with her sympathy and felicitations. My eldest boy begs to be remembered to you kindly.

P. S. Our best Christmas wishes for all your family circle. I trust you will have good weather for your time of ease.

You'll pardon this long letter. I don't often overwhelm you with long missives. But you are my publisher. The care of my reputation and my fortune in the New World are in your hands, and being very sure of your friendly sentiments I have written to you all that was in my mind.

To Mr. and Mrs. John Galsworthy

Capel House.
24 Dec., '18.

DEAREST ADA AND JACK,

You have been both very much in my mind but it's clear that I cannot hope to see you this year. So I send these few lines to carry to you the united affection (both boys are at home) of us all and all possible good wishes for unbroken felicity in your new home and many years of peace.

At the same time I'll confess that neither felicity nor peace inspire

me with much confidence. There is an air of the "packed valise" about these two divine but unfashionable figures. I suppose the North Pole would be the only place for them, where there is neither thought nor heat, where the very water is stable and the democratic bawlings of the virtuous leaders of mankind die out into a frozen, unsympathetic silence.

I haven't had any gout for a long time. I am sure I don't know why, and I am afraid to rejoice over much. I have been working,—or is it playing?—at a novel.[1] But I am not unduly elated. The gloom of the last two weeks (I mean atmosphere) was enough to cure the worst case of laughing sickness.

Ever affectionately yours.

To Sir Hugh Clifford

Capel House.
Jan. 25th, 1919.

MY DEAR OLD FRIEND,

I cannot delay any longer answering your letter and I would rather dictate it than put it off until I am able to sit up and write. I have been a prey to gout for many days and the state of public affairs does not help recovery in any great degree. True, the war is over, but in the success of our arms I had never a doubt. The future, however, is obscure enough and I cannot defend myself from discontent and anxiety. It may be more instinctive than rational, but yet it cannot be denied that there is something ill-omened in the atmosphere in which the peace and reconstruction problems are being tackled. The intervention of the United States was a great piece of luck for the Western Powers, but luck too has got to be paid for. The assistance came late but the full price will have to be paid for it nevertheless.

Of course my concern is for England, which engages all my affections and all my thoughts. I look at all the problems and incertitudes of the day from that point of view and no other. As to Poland, I have never had any illusions and I must render the Poles the justice to say that they too had very few. The Polish question has been buried so long that its very political importance is not seen yet. In this war it had not been of episodic importance. If the Alliances had been differently combined the Western Powers would have delivered Poland to the German learned pig with as little compunction as they were ready to give it up to the Russian mangy dog. It is a great relief to my feelings to think that no

[1] *The Rescue.*

single life has been lost on any of the fronts for the sake of Poland. The load of obligation would have been too great; and certainly, it is better to die than to live under a charge of moral bankruptcy, which would have been unfailingly made before many years. The only justification for the reëstablishment of Poland is political necessity, but that has never been very clearly seen except by a superior mind here and there, both in France and England. Nothing serious or effective will be done. Poland will have to pay the price of some pretty ugly compromise, as you will see. The mangy Russian dog having gone mad is now being invited to sit at the Conference table, on British initiative! The thing is inconceivable, but there it is. One asks oneself whether this is idealism, stupidity or hypocrisy? I do not know who are the individuals immediately responsible, but I hope they will get bitten. The whole paltry transaction of conciliating mere crime for fear of obscure political consequences makes one sick. In a class contest there is no room for conciliation.The attacked class cannot save itself by throwing honesty, dignity and convictions overboard. The issue is simply life and death, and if anything can save the situation it is only ruthless courage. And even then I am not certain. One may just as well defy an earthquake.

You and yours have been continually in our thoughts. I did not write to you before, dear friend, because what could one have written? The old order had got to die—and they died nobly—and at any rate the dead are at rest. It is those who are left who may have yet to bargain for their souls with the most materialistic and unscrupulous of forces that have ever moved mankind. A humiliating fate.

Borys has been gassed and shell-shocked in October on the Menin-Cambrai road during the Second Army's advance. After several weeks in hospital in France he is now with us on a month's convalescent leave. Poor Jessie has got the prospect of another operation. I am going to take her up to London in the first week of February and I do not know how long we shall have to stay there. What will be the end of it nobody can tell and frankly I am trying not to think of it. John is in a preparatory school. They are both of them very good children to us, but I look at them and ask myself how they will end! There is an awful sense of unreality in all this babel of League of Nations and Reconstruction and production of Commodities and Industrial arrangements, while Fisher prattles solemnly about education and Conciliation Boards are being set up to bring about a union of hearts while the bare conciliation of interests is obviously impossible. It is like people laying out a tennis court on a ground that is already moving under their feet. I ask myself who on earth is being deceived by all these ceremonies? It is really comic, but you know that in human affairs the comic and the tragic jostle each other at every step.

You must forgive me this typed letter. I can write only with great difficulty. Thanks for your green book, which I have read with the greatest interest.[1] I feel for you in your disappointment in harbour making. I should think that is the most hopeless coast in the world for an undertaking of that kind.

I do hope I shall see you this leave. We are leaving this house in March but we haven't yet found a place to go into.

Pray give my duty to Lady Clifford. My congratulations on the success of the *War-Workers*. It is a talent full of charm and promise. I haven't seen the recent book yet. I have read nothing of late; neither have I done in the last three years anything I care for.

Jessie begs to be remembered to you both affectionately.

Believe in my gratitude for your indulgent and unfailing friendship.

To J. B. Pinker

Capel House.
January 30th, 1919

DEAREST PINKER,

I have heard from Robert Jones. I will show you his note when I see you; it is hopeful. The consequence is that I am bringing Jessie to London on Wednesday next. I will have to get a closed car from London. A remnant of bronchitis still hangs about her and there is no other way. That's expense. And there will be more expense. I will give you a statement of what I foresee when we meet, so that you can finance me through it. I write to you like this because I don't know how I stand with you. Though of course I am not frightened, I am naturally rather anxious. Truly, twelve months ago I hoped for better things.

I just manage to hobble along. My mind has got its grip again and just to test it I finished yesterday a Preface for *The Outcast of the Islands,* about 16 hundred words. The labour is not thrown away because I have promised prefaces to Doubleday for every volume of the limited edition. I wanted to test myself with something I could finish in one go, as it were. I have done it, and it isn't at all bad.

To-morrow Miss Hallowes[2] proceeds to London to find some place for us to hang out in and make every arrangement for our stay. We will be three to arrange for: Miss Hallowes, Borys, and J. C. himself. B's extension of convalescent leave is the only piece of luck in these not very bright days.

[1] An official publication of the West African colony of which Sir Hugh Clifford was Governor at that time.

[2] J. C.'s secretary.

During Miss H.'s absence in London I shall revise and correct the latest pages of *The Rescue*. I suppose you understand that there is quite a batch of them—a good part of Part V all done before this beastly gout knocked me over. The production of further copy shall begin on Thursday morning next, I say—and there is no doubt whatever about it. I hope one of those two books will make a hit—I mean a money hit. I fancy it is *The Rescue,* which is picturesque and at the same time more conventional, that will prove the best spec. of the two.

Don't grow impatient with me, my dear fellow. I shouldn't like to think I am nothing but vanity and vexation of the spirit. Perhaps at least we shall win to comparatively placid years, where there will be no other problems but quiet writing for me and leisurely, astute and successful negotiating for you. Shall I ever get into real smooth water and you have no longer to stand by ready with ropes and lifebuoys watching my flounderings anxiously? Well, I don't mean to give up that hope as long as life lasts.

To J. M. Dent

Spring Grove, Wye
March 29th, 1919.

DEAR DENT,

The *Reminiscences* are not a collection of loose papers.[1] The book is an elaborately planned whole in a method of my own, and in the Preface too it is pointed out distinctly as being specially concerned with my first book and my first contact with the sea.

This, apart from the revelation of personality, is the subject; and I have nothing more to say about it. That is the complete *raison d'être* for the book as a piece of writing. It is the product of a special mood and of a day that will never come again to me. It is no more "material" than my very heart is "material." That sort of thing is not done twice any more than a book like the *Mirror of the Sea.*

Nash made from it a very presentable six-shilling volume in 1911.[2] Things have changed since, I know, but I am certain that the House of Dent will do its best under the difficult circumstances for that bit of prose which is closer to me than my own skin and can be neither stretched out nor have pieces let into it without losing its fundamental unity and its artistic character.

[1] This refers to *A Personal Record.*
[2] In 1912.

To John Galsworthy

Monday, [1919.]

DEAREST JACK,

I am of course with you entirely both as to the matter and the expression of the Agricultural pamphlet. Thanks very much for sending me the copy. It will be duly treasured both on account of its body and its soul, which is the soul of a great truth.

We went yesterday (by car!) to see John. He looked happy enough. But for me it was sad to behold the dear little pagan in the Eton jacket and horrible round collar.

Those people are really full of kindness and tact (I can see it plainly), but they have not the slightest conception of what he is. They will understand him presently when he has become like one of themselves. But I shall always remember the original,—the only genuine John,—as long as I live. Borys too had a particular impression of "the kid" which he could not define any better than I can mine. And he too will be sorry. As to Jessie they were too close together, she really loved him too much to see him clearly. She'll be always delighted with him. We took Nellie with us.[1] On the way back she said "Doesn't John look well!" (He was most gracious to her.) Then after a long while she said as if to herself: "Poor John!"

After this there's no more to be said.

To F. N. Doubleday

Spring Grove
17 Ap., 1919.

MY DEAR MR. DOUBLEDAY,

I was very glad to hear of your safe arrival in the Land of the Pilgrim Fathers, which contains, if not exactly the Garden of Eden, then the charming grounds of the Garden City. This, the latest message from it, is as pleasant to read as all the others I have been privileged to receive. It is also eminently distinguished by proceeding directly from you, and is furthermore notable as the longest letter I have received signed by F. N. D. This you may take as an exact fact established by careful comparison with other documents of the kind preserved in the family archives.

Seriously, my dear Mr. Doubleday, I am very much gratified by the words of hope and encouragement you have been good enough to send

[1] Nellie Lyons, one of the servants.

me so soon after your return. I am also touched by the sympathetic response extended by yourself, and your trusted associates in your work, to my long letter of the 21 December. I wrote frankly, in the hope of being understood, and now I have the comforting certitude of it being so.

Let me thank you for all the trouble and also for the success of your efforts in serializing *The Rescue*. I feel that your remarks on the advantage of appearing in the columns of a newly started magazine are eminently just. Pinker will be sending you the complete text before very long. I am glad to say that the proprietors of *Land and Water* profess themselves very pleased by the reception given to the serial here, and by its good effect on the circulation of the paper.

My thanks are due to you also for securing a review from Mr. Hergesheimer. Will you please thank him from me, not so much for what he found it in his heart to say, as for the warm, human (*not* critical) friendliness of his insight and for the very terms in which he expressed his, to me immensely welcome, appreciation. You have given me great pleasure by sending me that article in advance.

I do hope the friendly prophecies of your young men as to *A. of G.* will be fulfilled. The news as to the progress of your plans for the collected Edition is also very cheering. The texts of *A.'s Folly, Outcast* and *Nigger* are now corrected and ready. The Author's Note for *Outcast* will have reached you before you receive this. The Preface for the *Folly,* written at the time and never published before, is to be found in a MS. now in possession of Mr. Quinn, to whom I have already written begging him to send you a correct typed copy. The *Nigger* is sufficiently provided, both with a Preface and an Author's Note. I will send you in good time an Author's Note for the volume of *Tales of Unrest,* which will be of course the Number 4 in the order of publication. I haven't yet revised the text of that vol. but you may count safely on it being ready early in June. Can you give me an idea how many volumes you intend to send forth in 1919 and also in 1920? I want to do my little part worthily in that enterprise.

My wife is progressing but slowly. The boy has been invalided out of the army last week. Both are sending their kindest regards.

To Sir Sidney Colvin

Spring Grove,
29 May, 1919.

MY DEAR COLVIN,

Thanks for your good letter. I shall certainly try to come up in the first fortnight of June.

I could send you a copy of *Arrow of Gold* U. S. Edition but the correct text will be that of the first English edition, which I have just passed for the press. But that will not come out till October. The U. S. ed: text is faulty and I would like Lady Colvin and yourself to first see the *A. of G.* at its best.

On the 25th May (Rogation Sunday) I wrote the last words of *The Rescue,* which I began about 22 years ago![1] On the 28th I finished revising the final chapter, and now I am done with the thing till proofs of book-form begin to come in—next year sometime.

I shall feel much honoured to be mentioned in your article in *Scribners' Mag.*[2] It was very dear of you to send me the pages to see. Do you wish me to return them to you? I am delighted to have proof visual that you are at work on the material of your reminiscences in that informal manner. The tone is charming. Jess is just gone out for a drive. She's keeping her cheerful serenity.

With my dear love to you both.

To Hugh Walpole

Spring Grove.
30. 5. 19.

MY DEAR WALPOLE,

I am delighted with your appreciation of *A. of G.* and touched by the terms in which it is expressed.

You have put your critical finger on the spot. It is true that Mme Blunt–George scene is too long. But something may be said for it. Still it is a defect.

I'll be truly glad to see you here as soon as you can spare the time on your return to town.

On the 25th the last words of *The Rescue* were written,—and on the 28th I finished revising the last pages. And so that book, begun 22 years ago, passes out of my hands.

Glad to feel from your letter to Jessie that you have a great grip on your work and that your work has got such a strong hold of you. This is a blessed state.

With great affection.

[1] Twenty-three years before.

[2] An article on Robert Louis Stevenson, reprinted later on in Sir Sidney Colvin's book, *Memories and Notes* (Edward Arnold & Co., London, 1922).

To Sir Sidney Colvin

Spring Grove.
Monday [July, 1919]

MY DEAR COLVIN,

Ever so many thanks for your p. c. with the good news—Jessie sends her dearest love and I kiss the hands of the convalescent Lady who has such a large, such a preponderant place, in our affections—in so many people's affections.

We returned from Essex at about 6 o'clock last evening.[1] The whole household went to bed early. I waited till all sounds had died out, and then, with a mind refreshed and made receptive by a run of 120 miles (I am speaking seriously) I sat down to read your two articles—and it was a delightful (*c'est le mot juste*) experience. You are the most quietly effective of Magicians. The masterly, slightly amused, serenity with which you evoke all these distinguished, glorious shades of the first article, by (as it were) a mere turn of the hand (a wonderful turn of the hand it is, too) is a joy to the discriminating reader. But the article on R. L. S. is an evocation of a personality; and the sustained force of feeling under the conversational phrases so admirably put together make of that short paper a great performance.

I am infinitely touched, my dear Colvin, that you should have found me worthy to be mentioned on the same page with the brilliant and lovable friend of your youth. I regret only that I may appear in my admiration of the South Seas Vol. as not appreciative of R. L. S. as a "creator." Indeed, my dear Colvin, it is on that very ground that I admire the book. The islands may sink and the Pacific evaporate and even the terrestrial globe fly to pieces; but as long as one copy of the *South Seas* exists the King of Apemama will live, for R. L. S. has breathed his humanity into that "weird and ominous" figure and made of him our fellow man with loving touches of character and a marvellous insight into his power-loving and lonely soul.

As to my own figures, whose names your friendship remembers so well, there can be no question here of greater or less. They are *other*. I am conceited enough to think that had they been offered to his notice R. L. S. would not have ignored them. Liking or disliking, the generous great artist in prose would have recognized their existence.

Anchio son pittore.

[1] From a visit to the Hopes.

To Sir Sidney Colvin

Sat., [August, 1919.]

DEAREST COLVIN,

The Allègre affair,[1] I understand, was a fact, of which I make an extended version.

The R. of the *Tremolino* is by no means true, except as to her actual existence.[2] I mention her lightly, the subject of the paper being the *Tremolino* and her fate. *That* is literally true, just as the Rita of the *Arrow*[3] is true fundamentally to the shore connections of that time.

To Sir Sidney Colvin

Spring Grove,
7. 8. '19.

DEAREST COLVIN,

You are a real friend!

The first notices (day of publication) in *M[ornin]g. Post, D[ai]ly. Mail, D[ai]ly. News* are very poor, puzzle-headed, hesitating pronouncements; yet not inimical. A very unsatisfactory send-off.

Your question raises a delicate problem. A man of your *savoir-faire,* your sense of literary *convenances* and your *homme-du-monde* tact, is best fit to judge how the autob'al note, if struck, may affect the world—and the man.

With all deference then I venture to suggest that the view of its being a study of a woman, *prise sur le vif* (obviously, you may say) and also the story of young, very young love told with a depth of emotion pointing to experience is what you perceive, what impresses you—which makes the "quality" of the book. This said with your authority will amount to a confession—a sufficient confession to a not particularly delicate world.

Perhaps you could also discover a "personal note of youth" both in the (so to speak) innocence and the completeness of this love affair—this emotional adventure fated to end as it ends in a world not meant for lovers and between these two beings both outside the organized scheme of society not because they are *déclassés* in any sense but because of the origin of one and the deliberate renunciation of the other.

[1] Henri Allègre, one of the characters in *The Arrow of Gold.*

[2] This refers to Rita in the chapter entitled "The *Tremolino*" *in The Mirror of the Sea.*

[3] Rita, the principal character in the novel, *The Arrow of Gold.*

Pardon me if I have said too much. I rest in your affection and in your comprehension which I never doubted.

Our dearest love to you both.

Allègre is imagined from a glimpsed personality of no fame or position.

To J. B. Pinker

Spring Grove.
7. 8. '19.

DEAR PINKER,

I return here the lady's letter. I hope I am a modest person, but having dramatized the story myself [1] and it having been performed in three English towns, in Paris and also (for a week) in Chicago, and Bessie Carvill being absolutely the first conscious woman-creation in the whole body of my work, I can't find enough humility in me to proclaim my unbelief in it by letting an obscure writer (who does not even profess herself to be a dramatist) attempt the same thing. Had the proposal come from a distinguished playwright, with a European reputation even, I would have declined it. One must have some pride in one's work. I don't trot out mine very much but I have it all the same. If there is a demand for one-act plays as the woman says (I don't believe it) then I can't admit either to myself or to the world that what I have done is so contemptible that, with my name to it, it stands no better chance than a casual adaptation by the first person that comes along and with, apparently, no better qualifications for stage-work than I have.

All that it would be necessary to say in answer is that the lady is obviously not aware that Mr. C. himself had dramatized the story in a one-act play, under the title "One Day More," which has been performed in Europe and the U. S. and also published in English in a limited edition in London.[2]

S. Colvin is determined to have a review of *A. of G.* in *Observer* next week.[3] The day of publication notices in *M. Post D[ai]ly. Mail and D[ai]ly. News* were very poor. Not inimical, you understand, but puzzled and hesitating. Just what I feared! An uncertain send-off. And the worst of it is that at this season the public that is likely to ask for my book in libraries and bookshops is broken up, away on its holidays.

[1] The story "To-Morrow," dramatized as "One Day More."

[2] "One Day More," a play in one act by Joseph Conrad privately printed by Clement Shorter, February, 1917 (25 copies), and by the Beaumont Press, January, 1919.

[3] *Observer,* August 24, 1919.

The success of a novel is often made by tea-table and dinner-table talk. I think Unwin made a mistake in insisting on this date.

To John Galsworthy

Spring Grove.
8. 8. '19.

DEAREST JACK,

Indubitably you have an inborn knowledge—*la science profonde*—of the right things to say at a given moment: at any moment I imagine,—but certainly at the difficult period through which we have to live. The justness of all these things said in *Another Sheaf* is what strikes me most, the more so that one cannot question your sincerity even if one questions your views,—which I don't in the least. In all your French studies which I have seen you have all my sympathies. On the land question I am altogether with you. All you say about the stage seems to be undeniable, —only I am less hopeful than you seem to be: but it is *speculations* that appeal to my deeper feelings. In "Grotesques" I had the additional joy of that unique Galsworthian quality you put into your satires. Your Angel is simply *impayable*—quite beyond price: and the poor Dragoman has a pathetic air of helpless intelligence and seems to be an extremely decent fellow one would like for a friend.

I got as far as that when the belated copies of the *Arrow of Gold* arrived. I'll put this sheet of paper between the covers.

Never before was the act of publication so distasteful to me as on this occasion. Not that I shrink from what may be said. I can form a pretty good guess as to what will be said.

We are only moderately well.

To J. B. Pinker

Spring Grove.
14. 8. '19.

MY DEAR PINKER,

Thanks for the check received this morning.

I had this morning also a whole batch of cuttings, including a review by Holbrook Jackson in the *New Nation,* very enthusiastic, and another in *Everyman* by Beresford, who finds I am growing old, a rather sudden conclusion to arrive at on the evidence of only one book; because, as far as I can remember, nobody found traces of senile decay in *Victory* or *Shadow Line.* However, a beginning of that sort of thing had to be

made some time and I quite expected it to come on this occasion. I only wondered who would be the first to speak right out.

There is no denying the fact that there is a note of disappointment in almost every review; but as far as I can judge it seems to arise more from the subject and its treatment, which somehow fail to satisfy the critical mind, than from any perception of failing powers in the writer. This is the penalty for having produced something unexpected, and I don't grumble at it. I only don't see why I should have *Lord Jim* thrown at my head at every turn. I couldn't go on writing *Lord Jim* all my life, and I don't think you would have liked me to do so. I don't think that whatever has been written so far can affect the sales adversely. I remember that when Anatole France wrote his *Lys Rouge* (something that nobody expected him to write) the reception by the press was very much in the same note; yet my copy, bought some time in the middle of the nineties, is of the twenty-seventh edition. I don't expect that sort of miracle for myself, but I don't think that we need despair of a fair success with the public.

Have you any news from Garden City? In this connection I may tell you that I have a certain difficulty in beginning my Author's Note for the *Typhoon* volume. The volumes that have prefaces are—*Almayer, Outcast, Unrest, Nigger, Jim, Youth.*

Typhoon comes next in order to *Youth,* but Doubleday, with the six above, has got enough for a start. When the *Typhoon* Preface is done, there will be then two more books ready for the edition, because *Nostromo* which follows *Typhoon* is provided already with an Author's Note.

I am telling you this here for your information in case you should get some inaccurate statements or complaints from those people.

I suppose the whole thing is hung up for a time, but I hope that when it starts moving again you will let me know, so that I may get the others ready right away; which, just now, I don't feel very much disposed to do at once.

Jessie sends her love to Mrs. Pinker and yourself. One does not like to press for the promised night in this very hot weather, but how would it be if you and Mrs. Pinker came (say on Friday week) as far as Tonbridge Junc. and from there by car which we would send to meet your train. Then on Sat. you could return the same way. Jessie thinks that a mixed journey like this would be less irksome than either car or rail right through. And if you could bring your daughter with you it would be very charming and interesting to see her first under our roof. Pray tell Ralph [1] that Borys will be away on his Scotch call—so if he has any more amusing engagement we won't be mortally offended. . . .

[1] Ralph Pinker.

Anyway it rests with you to allow him to squeeze you in the car (which is only ample for 3) if you choose. Eric I suppose will be at the post of duty, but we hope he will be one of our first visitors in the new (unfurnished) house.

To J. C. Squire

Spring Grove.
August 21st, 1919.

Pardon this typewritten letter.

You are giving me most interesting news. My warmest wishes for success in every way in fame and fortune to your forthcoming adventure. May it command the respect of crowds, the affection of individuals and the loyal support of the young. As to the Old Gang (you call them the Illustrious I see—same thing), if you want to be good to them why, of course, you must not omit to put down my name too as contributor. What I could write that would be of any use to you I can't imagine at the moment. I don't know anything of the subjects you are going to treat but I am not likely to let my ignorance stand in the way of my ambition.

Please convey the expression of my profound gratitude to the writer of the *Arrow* review in the *N. S.*[1] It has never been my lot to get recognition so finely expressed as in the opening paragraph of that review.

I am sorry for the disappointment. Nothing would have been more dreary than a record of those adventures. All this gun-running was a very dull, if dangerous business. As to intrigues, if there were any, I didn't know anything of them. But in truth, the Carlist invasion was a very straightforward adventure conducted with inconceivable stupidity and a foredoomed failure from the first. There was indeed nothing great there worthy of anybody's passionate devotion.

But the undeserved appreciation of all those figures, which I have been moved to go and seek in that deep shadow in which from now on they shall rest undisturbed, is what touched me most. One does not undertake such a journey without misgivings. I hesitated for some sixteen years and, now it has been done, it would be the basest ingratitude in me to say that I regret the attempt. I have put my trust in the generosity of men and I have my reward.

[1] A review of *The Arrow of Gold* had just been published in the *New Statesman*, Aug. 16, 1919.

To Sir Sidney Colvin

Spring Grove.
Wednesday, [1919.]

MY DEAR COLVIN,

You will understand better how deeply I am moved by your letter when I tell you that during the "composition of that piece" I thought of you very often. I used to say to myself: "He will understand that" —after finishing certain bits. And as to the whole too I must confess I counted on you with some confidence. But I never expected that this work of my 60th year would find its way so straight into your heart! I own to feeling a little overwhelmed by the response. For you are generous without counting. You could be no other. Avarice is the vice of an age that you'll never, never reach.

You never suspected your close association with this book. And yet it is a fact that you are not the first but the only man to whom I spoke of it some months before I put pen to paper. It was at Capel. You stood with your back to the fire. But I did not lay a particular stress on my intentions and later I noticed that the circumstance had escaped your memory. And no wonder. I was very inarticulate that day—and on that subject too.

I can't give you an idea how worried I am over these corrections. A lot, of course, has been put right. I read the proofs innumerable times. Only the other week I sent six corrections more to Fisher Unwin. They were too late. And one of them is a grammatical blunder of the worst kind! Another is a *who* instead of *whom*. I had altered the construction of the phrase and forgot to insert the m. Horrible! The fact is, between you and me (and Lady Colvin of course), that I have never been able to read *these* proofs in cold blood. Ridiculous! My dear (as D. Rita would have said) there are some of these 42-year-old episodes of which I cannot think now without a slight tightness of the chest—*un petit serrement de cœur*. What a confession! Why, oh! why, didn't I send you the revise? I nearly did it. Then I felt ashamed of wishing to worry you with a work that was emphatically my business.

Well, you have made me very happy. The first great joy I had out of that book was Lady Colvin's sympathy. Your good opinion rounds and completes that state of deep content which nothing but the praise of such friends as you both are can give. Our dearest love to you both.

To Hugh R. Dent

Oswalds.
Bishopsbourne, Kent.
Oct. 15th, 1919.

MY DEAR DENT,

I am an author without a MS. drawer. I never have anything unpublished by me, or else I would certainly let you have it.

I am sorry I cannot for the present let you have the *Chronicle* articles, or even their dates. We have just come into this house and have not quite finished unpacking.

I can't let you have a type-script of *The Rescue* for I have none in my possession; but I have a printed text which I will send you directly I can spare it for your own reading—(not for setting). I am actually looking it over and can't part with it for some little time.

For goodness' sake don't give way utterly to the vice of "reading Conrad." I present this request of course very much against my inclination and only out of regard for your own person. I have heard a lady say that reading Conrad too much produced a "detestable effect" upon one. I don't know exactly what she meant by "detestable," but I feel it my duty to warn you. I suppose she was thinking of some kind of mental surfeit.

However, continue to think kindly of me.

To J. M. Dent

Oswalds.
Oct. 25th, 1919.

DEAR MR. DENT,

I called yesterday to ask you for one copy of *Nostromo* and one copy of *Shadow Line,* which last I want to give to my boy in order to replace the one he lost with the rest of his belongings during the retreat of March 21st. The copy of *Nostromo* is for Mrs. Thorne, the daughter of Henry Arthur Jones, who wants to have the edition with the Author's Note, of the existence of which she was not aware.

I saw J. B. Pinker for a few minutes yesterday morning and in justice to him I must tell you that in the matter of the difference which has arisen between you, he has been acting generally in accordance with my views. Personally I greatly dislike the idea of a collection to be made of fragments of my prose in volume form, even when the

object of it is educational. There is also the feeling that such an issue is, to a large extent, experimental and an unwillingness to face the possibility of the experiment not turning out a complete success without some good inducement of a material kind. I don't know the details of your negotiation, as I had hardly the time to exchange a few words on the subject with P., on whom I called in reference to quite a different matter having nothing to do with publishing. But I thought I would just put my point of view before you shortly, as I understood that the difference bears upon the question of royalties.

I suppose that the *Chronicle* articles about which you wrote me last week were those which appeared under the title of "Well Done!" From a note in my possession I see that they appeared in August, 1918.[1]

Some time ago the question of publishing a volume of my occasional work, such as articles on Daudet, Maupassant, France, H. James, the two *Titanic* articles, and a selection from several others, was mooted between P. and myself. The idea was rather new to me and at first not very attractive.[2] But if it came to anything I should certainly like it to come out uniform with the novels published by you. How does the idea strike you—the publication being planned for the autumn, 1920? By that time I shall be deep in the work on the third novel of my contract with you. *The Rescue* by then will be about six months old as a published book, and a volume of that sort may be useful just to keep my name before the public, both in this country and in America. On the other hand, that consideration is not of very great importance, and there may be perhaps an objection to include a volume of that character in your uniform set. My mind is not made up yet and I would be glad to know what views you have on the matter.

Of course anything of that sort would entail a certain amount of additional labour for the year 1920 which I am not very anxious to undertake.

To Mrs. Thorne

Oswalds.
2. 11. '19.

DEAR MRS. THORNE,

I have signed the Preface,—since this copy is sent to you for the sake of the Preface,—or rather Author's Note, as I call it. I've also written a few words on the flyleaf.

[1] Aug. 22, 23, and 24, 1918.

[2] These articles were finally collected and published as *Notes on Life and Letters*.

I have been greatly delighted by your sympathetic appreciation of the *Arrow*.

You will easily understand that of this affair not everything could be set down. The inner truth of the scene in the locked room is only hinted at.[1] And as to the whole who could have rendered its ominous glow, its atmosphere of exaltation and misery?

Daignez me garder un bon souvenir.

To Mme Alvar

Oswalds.
3 Nov. '19.

DEAR MME ALVAR,

I ought to have answered your letter ages ago. I hope our friend Aubry explained to you the reason of the delay. You need not have hesitated to write. You have expressed yourself charmingly and I can assure you that your fine and understanding sympathy has given me the greatest pleasure.

Nothing could have been more flattering to my *amour-propre* than your saying that "I knew how to lose my head, and how to keep it." The "Divine Madness" was so strong that I would have walked into a precipice, deliberately, with my eyes open, for its sake. And now it seems incredible; and yet it is the same old heart—for even at that distance of time I can't smile at it.[2]

Believe me, dear Mme Alvar, your very faithful friend and servant.

To J. B. Pinker

Oswalds.
Nov. 7th, '19.

DEAREST PINKER,

Thank you very much for your letter. I am glad to know of the magic properties of the coat which kept you warm in Tonbridge. I thought it was impossible. I am still more glad to hear from Eric, to whom I wired yesterday, that you are definitely better.

I think that I will ultimately avail myself of the introduction you send me for Mrs. Rea. My only trouble is that as a friend of Arnold Bennett she may be a person of distinction in her town and that I may find myself involved in social duties. The very thought makes me shiver

[1] The final scene in *The Arrow of Gold.*

[2] That paragraph refers to *The Arrow of Gold,* which had just been published.

in anticipation! Apart, of course, from the success of Jessie's operation, all my thoughts and all my vital energies will be concentrated on the play which every day seems to me a bigger and more difficult undertaking.[1] I don't mean by this that I shirk working at it. I have indeed worked yesterday and this morning to some purpose on the second scene of Act Two. The trouble is now to keep it within proper bounds as to length—there is so much to say and so much must be left out that the choice perplexes one and checks one's work. This is bad enough, but the real trouble will come when Act Three is taken in hand. As to Act Four I daren't even think of it. To make an audience of comfortable, easy-going people sup on horrors is a pretty hopeless enterprise; but I have developed crazily the ambition of making them swallow their supper and think it fine too. This is the way my madness lies at present.

I heard from Vernon this morning. He has accepted our invitation for Sunday, but will have to go back by the last train.

Our love to you both.

P. S. Pardon type. I dictated without thinking and am too lazy to re-write now.

To J. B. Pinker

Oswalds.
Nov. 11th, 1919.

DEAREST PINKER,

I told Vernon on Sunday that I would finish the Second Act the next day, and I did so according to plan. I hope to correct it in the course of to-day and post it to you at the same time with the letter, though in another envelope. Perhaps you will glance at it before sending it to John St., Adelphi, in the usual course.

V. and I got on very well indeed discussing the text and contriving scenery, in which last V. displayed his wonderful ingenuity. There are no longer any material obstacles in the way of a most effective production. He has solved them all to my complete satisfaction. As to the play itself V.'s hopefulness is so great as to frighten me a little. Still, he is an experienced and notable producer—he ought to know! Personally, I cannot defend myself from the dread of the whole thing turning out repulsive to average minds and shocking to average feelings.[2]

As I go on in my adaptation, stripping off the garment of artistic expression and consistent irony which clothes the story in the book, I perceive more clearly how it is bound to appear to the collective mind of the

[1] *The Secret Agent.*

[2] All this letter refers to the dramatization of *The Secret Agent.*

audience a merely horrible and sordid tale, giving a most unfavourable impression of both the writer himself and of his attitude to the moral aspect of the subject. In the book the tale, whatever its character, was at any rate not treated sordidly; neither in tone, nor in diction, nor yet in the suggested images. The peculiar light of my mental insight and of my humane feeling (for I have *that* too) gave to the narrative a sort of grim dignity. But on the stage all this falls off. Every rag of the drapery drops to the ground. It is a terribly searching thing—I mean the stage.

I will confess that I myself had no idea of what the story was till I came to grips with it in this process of dramatization. Of course I can't stop now. Neither can I tamper with the truth of my conception by introducing into it any extraneous sentiment. It must remain what it is. Having arrived at that conclusion (which, at any rate, is honest) I have resolved that since the story is horrible I shall make it as horrible as I possibly can. If there is any salvation for it, it may possibly be found just in *that*. But I have not many illusions on that score. There is very little chance of salvation. There will be very little glory or profit in this production. In fact, I have a feeling that it will be to me rather damaging than otherwise.

I have, as usual, opened my heart to you. Don't trouble to answer my arguments. I only want you to know. I don't suppose for a moment you will think I am discouraged.

It is a great experience and I want it to be complete.

Love to you from us both.

Mauretania arrived yesterday at South'on. R. Jones must be on board. The time draws near. Don't think me ungrateful but I mean to avoid all social obligations in L'pool.[1] The play'll take up my mornings and the Nursing Home all my afternoons. In the evening I'll want to be quiet. I need that. Do thank Arnold Bennett warmly for me, but I do not think I'll write to Mrs. Rea. I'll want Borys to go over soon and look up such lodgings as may be advertised from day to day.

To Gerald Cumberland

Oswalds.
Nov. 20, 1919.

DEAR MR. CUMBERLAND,

At the beginning I must say that I have not read the tales through as yet. I am just now in a special mood which prevents me attaining

[1] Joseph Conrad was taking Mrs. Conrad to Liverpool to be operated on by Sir Robert Jones.

that complete detachment from one's personality which would be necessary to answer your question: if I ever dare to answer it.

Perhaps if you were a youthful beginner it would have been somewhat easier. But you are not a beginner. You have written books, and, at your age, you ought surely to know the strength and character of the temperament behind your pen. And I suspect that you really do know all about yourself. I have not seen any criticisms—contemptuous or otherwise—of your volume of tales. I can see that they are mature productions, the expression of a personality already formed and obviously talented; but I can't form an opinion of its strength from these pages, nor yet gauge the force of the creative impulse that, if you go on, go on in that direction, would have to sustain you to the end of the road. I have no critical faculty. No man should trust me in that, because I don't trust myself. The case of my question to Mr. Jacques doesn't make a good precedent.[1] I had already then (though I did not know it myself) lived one of my lives. I was content with it; and had his verdict been different I would have been perfectly content with it to this day. I had no conception of what a literary ambition may be and I don't know that I understand it even now. The very form of my question proves it sufficiently. I didn't ask him whether I should write. I didn't think of writing then. I really did not care what he might say. But I imagine that if he had said "No" I would have gone on and finished that piece of writing, simply because, in truth, I did not care.

And ever since I must confess that, in truth, I never did care what anybody said. It may appear a most brutal and ungrateful thing to come from a man who has been so well understood. When, after finishing *Almayer's Folly,* I hesitated at the parting of the ways, not at all from literary ambition but because of the strong hold my old life had still on me, I admit that it was Edward Garnett who tipped the balance. His words were: "You have the style, you have the temperament. Why not write another?" You will observe that he said nothing about the pursuit of literature. He simply said:—"Why not write another?" And I verily believe that I can do no better than pass on those words to you.

To R. B. Cunninghame Graham

Oswalds.
22. 11. '19.

DEAREST DON ROBERTO,

I am just fresh from the second reading of your vol. My dear friend,

[1] This refers to the episode of the first reader of *Almayer's Folly.* See *A Personal Record,* Chapter I.

the track of your unshod horses may be faint but it is imperishable.

There is a tone, a deep vibration, in these latest pages of yours which has moved me profoundly.

In this great wealth of things grown precious with time it is hard to say on which the heart is set especially. Wonder goes with one as one turns the pages; in the Park or in the Pampa you have the gift of drawing the reader with you into the very core—the central, the imponderable—of your own experience; so that unless he be dead to all truth he looks at the lands of this earth (on which you have travelled so much) with your own eyes—the eyes of a wanderer, of a horseman and of a *très noble gentilhomme.*

"Los Pingos"—"Bopicua," [1] which of them, or of any one between, do I like best? When I read you I identify myself so completely with your words, your sensations and, as it were, the very soul of your vision that I'll never be able to answer that question to myself.

A vous de cœur.

To Sir Robert Jones

Oswalds.
5. 3. '20.

DEAREST SIR ROBERT,

Ever so many thanks for the message for me you gave to the boy. I shall certainly not worry now. And I don't think I worried much before. Weren't *you* there? That thought was enough to keep worry off. Still a man somewhat disabled for the common activities of life and feeling himself helpless, or, at any rate, unhelpful, from that cause, is an easy prey to anxiety.

I look forward to your arrival under our roof,—before very long, on some glorious day. My only concern now will be how to meet you with unbandaged hands, un-lame feet, un-aching back, un-anything of all these things that are as daily in my life as the daily bread of it. But for the last I have worked, whereas for the former I haven't even prayed. Why I should be thus privileged I can't imagine.

I hope all is well with your children and grandchildren. I don't know yet because I only expect my wife home this evening. I shall then also have reports of you.

I hope you will never dream even of taking any notice of this horrid scrawl. After all,—all I wanted to tell you is that I am and always shall be with the greatest regard most affectionately yours.

[1] From *Brought Forward* (Duckworth).

Front view of Oswalds, Bishopsbourne. Kent, where Joseph Conrad lived from October, 1919, to August, 1924

To John Quinn.[1]

[March 24, 1920.]

I confess to some little gratification at the thought that the unbroken Polish front keeps Bolshevism off and that apparently the reborn state has one heart and one soul, one indomitable will, from the poorest peasant to the highest magnate. Those magnates, by the by, have now no more power and precious little more wealth than the poorest peasant, with whom they fight shoulder to shoulder against moral and physical pestilence bred in Russia, on a line from the Baltic provinces to the present frontier of Roumania. The magic sense of independence is the cause of that union without reserves and regrets which enables that three times devastated and impoverished country to put forth its physical strength, and on the very morrow of rising from its old historical part of defender of civilization against the dangers of barbarism, once Tartar and Turkish, and now even worse, because arising no longer from the mere savagery of nomad races, but from an enormous seething mass of sheer moral corruption—generating violence of a more purposeful sort.

To John Galsworthy

Oswalds.
28. 3. '20.

BEST AND DEAREST FRIEND,

Thanks with all my heart for the dedication[2] you promise to us both. Jessie no doubt has written to you already. She is extremely delighted at having her existence acknowledged in that way.

Pray, dear Jack, drop us a line to say how dear Ada is after the journey. I am afraid you will come in for the season of beastly spring winds mostly from the East. I dread their coming,—though I don't see how they can make me much worse than I've been for the last ten weeks.

Poor Jessie has been laid up for a month now. She's quite crippled again. The severe disappointment after the bright prospects of only two months ago has affected her spirits,—at last. I am very anxious

[1] An extract of a letter published in the New York *Tribune,* Monday, April 5, 1920.

[2] Of *In Chancery.*

about her. However Sir. Robert [1] has announced his arrival for Wednesday next, and we shall know then what is to be done.

You will be shocked to hear that I have just finished dramatizing the *Secret Agent*. (Now the murder's out.) It is very horrible. Vedrenne has got it to look at. If it ever gets on the stage the audience won't lynch the author because I don't intend to be there, but I've warned V. that they will probably try to burn the theatre before they go home.

I've managed to ram everything in there except the actual cab-drive. It was very interesting to do,—and perfectly useless.

In haste to catch post.

To John Galsworthy

Oswalds.
Tuesday, [April, 1920.]

DEAREST JACK,

Thanks for your letter. We assume Ada is tolerably well by now.

Jessie is going on excellently. Had a fair night and is trying to make little jokes in a yet feeble voice.

I am a little awed by your mysterious warning as to *In Chancery* dedication. I take it as an act of our old friendship and, God knows, I am glad you have thought of it for us both. No other idea or consideration can intrude on my feelings there. I can't simply conceive that you of all people would do anything to shock my sensibilities. If I could not trust you, whom could I trust? Of course I want to see the MS., but that is mere eagerness: and now you have aroused my curiosity to the highest pitch, I'll never forgive you if you don't send the MS. instanter to the above address.

My dear, I never knew (for certain) that you thought well of the *Secret Agent*. I wish to goodness I could come up to see your new play, but I am still lame and existing so much on the verge of a heavy attack that I dare not trust myself in town for the night: especially just now with Jessie laid up in Canterbury.

Our dear love to you both.

To John Galsworthy

Oswalds, 20. 4. '20.

MY DEAREST JACK,

I finished your MS. yesterday and am very much impressed by the ampleness of the scheme, the masterly ease in handling the subject

[1] Sir Robert Jones.

and (in sober truth) the *sheer beauty* of these pages. Oh! my dear fellow, it is good! A great Saga!

And so poor James is gone at last.[1] His "Nobody tells me anything" has been for years a household phrase at which all my little family duly smiles,—even John who knows James only from hearsay, not having yet read *The M. of Property.*

I miss him awfully. I broke the news to Jessie. She inquired about the others. I told her of Soames's marriage and she was very much surprised. Who would have thought it! But here it is,—and Soames is undeniable. His solidity is amazing. A great creation,—and in this mainly that it fills completely the limits of possibility without ever raising a doubt in one's mind. Surprise is not doubt,—you know.

James's long meditation (in the dining room) is what the French would call *saisissant.* There is a quality in the life of all these Forsytes that makes it more true in its imaginative force than the most scrupulously rendered actuality. *Œuvre de poète!* There is no doubt about it, my dear Jack.

I keep the MS. for Jessie to read. She is coming home to-day. In the Nursing Home she could only read *Tatterdemalion,* which I have not yet read. I didn't want to take it away from her even for an evening, as she seemed unable to tackle any other of the 12 vols. she had in her room. She gave her love for you both last night.

I am now off to Canterbury to see her put into the ambulance. I am sorry for poor Ada with all the sincerity of a man "who knows what it is." My loving duty to her.

To the National Committee Polish Government Loan[2]

London, April 26, 1920.

For Poles the sense of duty and the imperishable feeling of nationality preserved in the hearts and defended by the hands of their immediate ancestors in open struggles against the might of three powers and in indomitable defence of crushing oppression for more than a hundred years is sufficient inducement to assist in reconstructing the independent dignity and usefulness of the reborn republic, investing generously in honour of the unconquered dead in testimony of their own national faith and for the peace and happiness of future generations. To Americans one appeals for the recognition in the Polish Nation of that patriotism not of the flesh but of the spirit which has sustained them so

[1] This refers to James Forsyte, one of the characters of the *Forsyte Saga.*
[2] Cablegram sent to Washington.

well in the critical hours of their own history in the name of common memories at the dawn of their own independent existence on the ground of rare humanity, and as to lovers of perseverance and courage. America cannot but feel sympathy for an idealism akin to her own in this instance of unselfish union of all hearts and all hands in the work of reconstruction. For the only sound ground of democracy is that unselfish toil in a common cause. Americans would wish help rebuilding that outpost of Western civilization, once overwhelmed by but never surrendered to the forces representing what they themselves detest in humanity, tyranny and moral lawlessness. Please edit as required. Salutations.

To G. Jean-Aubry [1]

Oswalds, June 14th, 1920.

MY DEAR AUBRY,

I am just getting over a most severe and unexpected attack of gout, which felled me last Monday after my return from London, where I had spent a few hours in B. M. reading some of the works you have been good enough to discover for me more than a year ago.[2]

I feel fairly bad still and even the dictating of this insignificant letter is a great effort. Sir Robert Jones did not come last week, but he may visit my wife this week. It will all depend on the report of the local surgeon, who will be writing to him to-day.

I have heard, so to speak unofficially, that Bennett [3] either has read, or is going to read, the play.[4] *Ceci entre nous,* for I can't expect he will care for it and there is no need to take the world into one's confidence on so doubtful a matter. And in connection with this, do you still think it worth while to translate those Four Acts? If so, I will ask Pinker to have a fresh copy made. There are two in existence now, I think, but one is in America and the other, I suppose, with Bennett. I do not know how long he may keep it and just now I am too depressed to care for the upshot of the whole affair. It is not very fascinating to me in any case.

Please, my dear fellow, thank Mme Alvar from me for her good

[1] The letters Joseph Conrad wrote to G. Jean-Aubry were usually written in French and only occasionally in English; many others will be found later on in the volume of Joseph Conrad's *Lettres Françaises.*

[2] Some books in the British Museum concerning the sojourn of Napoleon in Elba, which would help Joseph Conrad to write certain passages of *Suspense.*

[3] Arnold Bennett.

[4] "The Secret Agent."

letter and tell her that I would really be grateful if she could let me know whether this Swedish translation is adequate.[1] I should like to produce a good impression on any readers I may obtain in Sweden; it is not so much a matter of vanity as of actual sympathetic feeling for the country and the people.

Jessie sends her warmest regards.

Tout à vous.

To Hugh R. Dent

Oswalds, June 24th, 1920.

MY DEAR MR. DENT,

Many thanks for the advance copy of *The Rescue,* which I received this morning and, as was only proper, inscribed at once to my wife.

You were good enough when I saw you last to undertake to have one copy bound in morocco for me for presentation to Penfield.[2] I have another presentation of that sort to make; I must therefore ask you to have *two* copies instead of one bound in morocco for me in the same style in which the previous copies you have been good enough to have bound for me were done.

I am looking forward to getting my own six copies to-morrow morning, but I must ask you to let me have some more at the special price as per agreement. And you mustn't be scandalized, either, at my gratuitous distributions. So many people send me their books that, with the few old friends who of course expect to have copies from me, a dozen doesn't go a very long way. And then there are copies that must go to France—three at least, I think,—and one or two to Poland. Upon the whole I think you had better send me a dozen (besides my six free copies) at your early convenience, because if such a distribution must be made it had better be made graciously, without undue delay which may look like carelessness or reluctance on my part.

I don't know whether I told you that there is a very fine review, very fine indeed, by Richard Curle, all ready, set up and proof corrected, for appearance in the *New Statesman.* I don't know whether Desmond Macarthy will be inspired to print it in this week's issue. I suppose it would not be very possible, as I imagine the literary part of the *New Statesman* must be printed early in the week, but we may be sure of it on the Friday next after the day of publication.

I was very sorry to see you so crippled yesterday, but I trust that

[1] The Swedish translation of *The Arrow of Gold.*

[2] The American Ambassador in Vienna who "rescued" the Conrad family when in Poland in September, 1914, and to whom *The Rescue* was dedicated.

when you come down here on your promised visit you will be able to move as well as your friends would wish to see you.

Everybody I've met displays a great confidence in *The Rescue's* success. I have been plunged in it too deep and for too long a time to have a clear sense of its quality. All the world *may* be wrong. Your own confident opinion is the one that has the most weight with me, and after that, J. B. Pinker's, who, apart from his literary tastes, has, I have noticed, an almost unerring judgment as to the chances of a work of fiction.

On returning home yesterday I found an absurd wire from the ——— asking me to say whether that forthcoming book of mine had in it "any message for the young." Could anything be more silly than such an inquiry and, especially, to a man like me who had never flapped any "message" in the face of the world? I was sorely tempted to answer that it all depended whether the "young" in question was an ass or not. But I controlled my feelings and wired a reply to the effect that "in a work exclusively artistic in its aim to appeal to emotions there should be something for everybody, young or old, who was at all susceptible to æsthetic impressions." I don't know what else I could have said and remained polite at the same time. I hope you will approve of what I have done.

Please tell me whether Sir Sidney Colvin sent you back one copy of bound proofs you forwarded to him (I suppose) for reviewing purposes. I should like to know that.

To J. B. Pinker

July 10th, 1920.

MY DEAR PINKER,

I answer your inquiry at once as to the MS. of "The Duel." [1] I don't recollect whether it has been preserved at all, but if so it is in the possession of John Quinn of New York, 31, Nassau Street. Those inquirers seem to think that I have set up a shop of those things. If any of those MS. hunters worry you in the future the following statements may be shown to them:

All my MSS. in pen-and-ink are, as far as they have been preserved (complete or incomplete), in the possession of the aforesaid John

[1] The MS. of "The Duel" was not in the possession of John Quinn of New York, as it was not among the 230 items of the catalogue of the Quinn Sale. (November 12–13, 1923.)

Quinn, with the exception of the MS. of *The Rescue* (pen-and-ink, 602 pp., incomplete)—the last of them being the MS. of *Shadow Line.*

After that book all the First Drafts of my novels, typed and corrected by my own hand, are in the possession of T. J. Wise, of London, who has also acquired the pen-and-ink pages of *The Rescue,* with the complementary typed Draft, (corrected) to the end.

No MSS. or TSS. of mine are or are likely to be on the market for some considerable time, if I am to trust the voluntary statements of the above two collectors.

It may be added that a few short MS. items (not novels) have been given away to be sold for charitable purposes during the war. In whose hands these are of course I cannot tell.

To Edward Garnett

Oswalds.
11 July, '20.

DEAREST EDWARD,

On some days my wrist is so disabled that I can't write at all—and dictating letters is a horror.

Thanks for your letter and the interesting enclosure. Now the thing[1] is done I am ready to forget all about it—all except your interest, the thought and time you've given to it, the great constancy of your friendship. This, my dear Edward, is what these pages will always mean to me. I tried to make the best of your advice in the general current of the last half; and, as to details, all your remarks and suggestions (in the margin of the *L*[*and*]. *&* *W*[*ater*]. text have been adopted and followed, except in one instance amounting to about a line and a half.

Please tell the writer of the critical note on Mrs. Travers that, speaking in all sincerity, I am immensely gratified by her appreciation and very much impressed by the acuteness of her analysis. One or two notice writers felt that there was something wrong. And my answer is *to them* that if I had hung Mrs. Travers for five minutes on Lingard's neck (at the last meeting) they would have been perfectly satisfied. To her I would only advance in palliation that one must take account of facts. The blowing-up of the *Emma* was a fact. It destroyed suddenly the whole emotional situation, not only for them all but also for me. To go on after that was no joke. And yet something had to be done at once! I cared too much for Mrs. Travers to play pranks with her on the line of heroics or tenderness; and being afraid of striking a false note I

[1] *The Rescue.*

failed to do her justice—not so much *in action,* I think, as in expression.

After the last incision two weeks ago there is a distinct improvement in Jessie's state. But it will be a long, long job. Our love to you. I'll write again soon.

To Laurence Holt [1]

Oswalds, 20. 7. '20.

DEAR MR. HOLT,

To be still recognized after all these years as a seaman by the head of a House known so long and so highly honoured on the wide seas touches me deeply. I wish to thank you warmly for a moment of sincere emotion of a kind I did not think life could yet hold for me in store.

I will confess to you my diffidence—as a man of the Port of London honoured by being called into counsel on a Liverpool scheme. In your great Sea-city, which always has been regarded in my time as the premier port of the United Kingdom, you have round you all the assistance that experience, knowledge and native sagacity can give.

It would, however, be a gross ingratitude to answer your request conveyed in such flattering terms by anything short of a perfectly frank statement of my ideas. The problem of education and training for Merchant Officers has been always very near my heart. I don't mind telling you on this occasion that ever since I became officer of a ship (3rd of the *Loch Etive,* Glasglow Gen[l] Shipp[2]. Co. in 1880) I have tried to do my duty by the boys. A good many passed through my hands when I became chief officer; some Conway boys, others coming from schools on shore. I am proud to say that some of them (of various social grades and different up-bringings) still remember keeping watch with "the Mate" and drop him a line now and then.

Thanks very much for your most kind invitation, which I am sorry I cannot accept. Apart from arrears of work, there is the health of my wife. Your distinguished fellow townsman, Sir Robert Jones, is coming here to see her at the end of this week and of course I must be at hand.

In a day or two I will send you a short memorandum [2] expressing only

[1] The Managing Director of the Ocean Steam Ship Co., Ltd., Liverpool, had written on the 16th of July to Joseph Conrad about the plan they had to build a large five-masted barque to accommodate some 60 to 80 cadets as a sort of training ship for the Merchant Service. They were anxious to have Joseph Conrad's criticisms both as to the character of the vessel herself and as to the way in which she should be run. Unhappily nothing came of the scheme, although a complete design had been drawn up for the ship, as difficulties had arisen which took precedence of all other considerations.

[2] Now printed in *Last Essays.*

a general view of the matter under consideration, for indeed I have no competence for dealing with particulars. Conditions do change. The great point is to keep the continuity of the spirit of ungrudging service.

To Laurence Holt

Oswalds.
Saturday, 24. 7. '20.

MY DEAR SIR,

My secretary has just returned from leave and is engaged in typing the memorandum which will consist of about 14 pp. and a covering (open) letter to you, bringing forward the idea of "classical training" on which the whole argument of the memorandum is founded.

I know you will give it a patient reading, though the very first postulate may shock you as being wrong-headed and altogether "impossible."

As to the "impossibility" I am ready to admit it at once—if you say so. As to "wrong-headed," I don't say that. I am only consistent—but perhaps to an impracticable degree.

I am concerned mostly in the memorandum with the spirit of the scheme. I know it will be embodied worthily—whatever shape it may take.

It would be a great, a very great, pleasure to have you here for lunch and the afternoon (with the designer, of course). But I have a consciousness of the value of your time. It would take up the whole of your day, and the railway journey to and fro is a horrid grind. This much I had to say—and now I can only assure you, that the car will meet any train you name in Canterbury (which is our R'way. station for our friends) on the 3rd of August—or any other day.

Of course, if after seeing the memo[um] you still think a talk with me may be of the slightest use, I will do my best to come up to town for the purpose. But I am a miserable slave to gout and may be prevented at the very last moment.

P. S. The memo[um] will be posted on Monday morning at the latest.

To Laurence Holt

Oswalds, July 25th, 1920.

DEAR MR. HOLT,

As I have told you before, the education and the training of Merchant Service Officers has been always a matter of extreme personal interest to

me. In my time I did my best in my small way to instil a definite conception of their calling into the minds of the boys I had with me in various ships. Since then the problem has been often in my thoughts, especially as regards the actual *training,* as distinguished from mere imparting of knowledge in a theoretical way, which is under the more or less efficient control of the Board of Trade.

In view of the radical change which has come over the Merchant Service in my time, the scheme which the patriotism and the national sea-spirit has suggested to the Liverpool shipowners must naturally be, as it were, an embodied inheritance of the past. The principle underlying the processes of my thought applied to this practical matter is in a sense the same which lies at the basis of classical education. The public-school man, even if he devotes himself to literature afterwards, has no immediate practical, and as it were, *material* use for the classical lore he has acquired. He cannot toil slavishly in the track of Homer and Virgil or conduct his public life in rigid adherence to the political views of Thucydides or the opportunism of Cicero. Indeed it would be very fatal for him to do so. He will only have gained a more liberal conception of his attitude to life and a strong inner feeling of that continuity of human thought, effort and achievement which is such an inspiring and at the same time such a steadying element in national existence, and in the corporate life of any body of men pursuing a special calling.

A year, or a year and a half, of training in a seagoing sailing ship I would regard for a boy destined for the sea as a course in classical practice of the sea. What he will actually learn on board that ship he will leave behind him directly he steps on the deck of a modern steamship. But he will have acquired the old lore of the sea, which has fashioned so many generations down to his very fathers and in its essence will remain with the future generations of seamen, even after the day when the last sail and the last oar have vanished from the waters of our globe.

Fortunately to reach antiquity in this case we need not go back very far. The evolution has been so swift that the classic time, though gone for ever, is still at our door. The sailing ship, as evolved by the needs and enterprise of shipowners, the imagination of shipbuilders and the requirements of seamen, reached its perfection of design in the years between '50 and '80. Like a good many other human inventions this hour of perfection was, so to speak, its last hour. After 1880 there was strictly speaking no evolution, there was only growth in a literal sense, in the mere size of ships, implying a loss in other directions. I put this point of view plainly before you, as the remarks I will have to offer will be guided by it in their relation to the tonnage, rigging, handling and management of the vessel destined in the view of the Liverpool Mer-

cantile Community to give, what I call, a course of classical training to the seamen of that port where so many maritime enterprises have been conceived with audacity and success; bringing with them also those changes which have so profoundly affected the sea life of to-day.

To Hugh Walpole

Oswalds.
7. 10. '20.

MY DEAR HUGH,

I left the "civilities" to Jessie, who has no doubt written to you already. This is only to tell you that I have read the book [1]—which is a book,—a creation,—no small potatoes indeed,—*très chic;* and if the truth must be told, *très fort* even,—considerable in purpose, successful in execution and deep in feeling,—a genuine Walpole: this, with an unexpected note of maturity in design and composition; and holding the interest from page to page, which in itself is not a common quality. O! dear, no!

All I want to do here, really, is to shake hands with you over it in friendship and congratulation. More when we meet on Sat.

To C. S. Evans [2]

20–21, Bedford Street, London.
2nd September, 1920.

DEAR MR. CONRAD,

I send herewith the proofs of *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* with queries marked in pencil on a number of pages.

I have queried the spelling of "minnyt" in Donkin's speech, chiefly because it is spelt differently in different parts of the book. But I hope you won't mind my suggesting also that this spelling of the word does not really show any departure from the correct pronunciation of the word, which the Oxford Dictionary gives as "minit"—unless you mean that Donkin gave the word a long "i."

For the same reason I have queried the spelling of "Hymposed," since Donkin would only adorn the word with an initial aspirate. On page 172 a number of "you's" appear in Donkin's speech,—he usually says "yer."

[1] *The Captives, a Novel in Four Parts,* by Hugh Walpole. Macmillan & Co., London, 1920.

[2] Of the editorial department of William Heinemann.

These are, of course, all small points, and I hope you won't mind my bringing them to your notice.

Yours sincerely.
C. S. EVANS.

(*On the back of the above letter Joseph Conrad wrote this reply:*)

Sept. 3, 1920.

DEAR MR. EVANS,

A. I don't know really how Donkin pronounces *minnyt,*—but I know that the phonetic spelling of the Oxford Dictionary is a mere phantasy: for no one says *minit,* giving exactly the same sound to both "i's" in that word.

B. All the phonetics of Donkin's speech are wrong, alas! A real cockney drops his aspirates,—but he *never* adds one. It's the country people who do that. I have for this the undeniable authority of Mr. Edwin Pugh. A cockney will naturally say "ome" for *home,* but he would *never* say (for instance) *hoperation* for *operation.* What I ought to have done was to take *every* initial *h* out of his speeches, since I called him a cockney. But God only knows what Donkin is! It's too late now to chase all those *h's* out of the text, I fear.

Yer—you should be adhered to as printed in my first Ed.

Many thanks for your good care.

Yours gratefully.

P. S. I have written additional par: to *Almayer's* Preface.

To Admiral Goodenough

Oswalds. 25. 9. '20
Bishopsbourne, Kent.

MY DEAR ADMIRAL,

Your most unexpected—and most welcome—letter from Saldanha Bay reached me in Deal, of all places! But this house is only 18 miles from there and we had run over for a week's change.

After I had finished reading I looked away to the eastward and had a particular feeling that it was good to get this "Well done" from a Flag Officer in sight of the historic anchorage where, as a very young seaman, I lay at anchor for the first time in 1878. It was also the year when I heard first the honoured name you bear on the lips of men in the ships of the Australian wool fleet, in which I began my deep-water life

and where I got my first promotion. The universal affection and respect for the Commodore is one of my earliest impressions and has remained a part of my sea-memories. While you had your broad pennant in the *Southampton* I was more than glad to see history repeating itself like this, in home waters and at such a crucial moment of Fate.

I have written all this to make it clear why, even apart from considerations personal to yourself, no word from you could be regarded as coming from "a perfect stranger" (your own words).

I am immensely pleased at your good opinion of *The Rescue* and very touched that you should have taken the trouble to tell me that. There are acts of kindness for which it is very difficult to thank a man. One does not know what to say.

That thing has been on the stocks for something like twenty years. I laid it aside the year my eldest boy was born and did not take it up again till he returned after the Armistice after 3½ years on the French front. It struck me then that my time was running out and I wanted the deck cleared before going below. As to leaving any loose ends hanging over the side, I couldn't bear the thought of it! For that reason I have been collecting all my occasional writings into a vol. which will appear next spring under the title of *Notes on Life and Letters*. I will send it out to you, not for its interest but as a token of my warmest regard—which is yours hereditarily and personally. I don't know how small your "little ship" is, but I can trust you to have the book stowed somewhere where it will not spoil her trim. Believe me, my dear Admiral, most sincerely and gratefully yours.

To Thomas J. Wise

Oswalds, Nov. 1st, 1920.

MY DEAR MR. WISE,

I have now finished working at the film play [1] and can tell you something of what that item will look like.

It consists: First, of a Manuscript composed of 175 leaves numbered in red pencil 1 to 168, and with seven more, interpolated in their proper place, and numbered 87A to 87G. Of these leaves, the two first are written in black pencil, and there are eight others about the middle of the MS. written in blue pencil. All the rest are in pen and ink: and the whole is written on two kinds of paper: thin from 1 to 100 incl. and thick from 100 to the end.

[1] A film version of "Gaspar Ruiz," the first tale in the volume *A Set of Six*. "The Strong Man" has never been produced on the film and the scenario never been printed.

The MS. is the complete summary scenario of the film play entitled "The Strong Man," and is of course from beginning to end written in my own hand. It is in no sense a collection of notes, but a consecutive development of the story in a series of descriptions, just as the whole thing presented itself to me when I first began to think the subject out in its purely visual aspect. Such a line of composition being perfectly novel to me, I found it necessary to write it all down so as to have the whole thing embodied in a definite shape, before I could attempt to elaborate it into a detailed presentation for the reading of the Film's Literary Editor.

Second: from that MS. I went on then to dictate a more detailed and final version into a type-script numbering 81 pages, of which every one contains slight modifications and corrections in pen and ink in my own handwriting. That TS. has been marked "First Copy" and together with the MS. described above gives the whole process of conception and composition of my first (and perhaps my last) film play. It is based on the story called "Gaspar Ruiz" (*Set of Six,* 1908).

To J. B. Pinker

Oswalds, 18. 11. '20.

DEAREST J. B.,

Thanks for your holograph received this morning. All this looks nice and hopeful and *is* cheering. I am absolutely at one with you as to giving McK.[1] all reasonable latitude. I am sorry that the "Secret Agent" is to be 2nd—not because I am impatient to see it on the boards, but because the *previous* play's success (or failure), it seems to me, must be reflected in the judgment that will be pronounced on my first effort. I know how the minds of the professional critics work. They live on comparisons, because that is the easiest method of appreciation. Whereas I hate them, even if made in my favour. This is a very private confidence which I impart to you who understand me now as well as I understand myself. That good friend Vernon's interest is also very gratifying to me. Tell him so please when occasion offers. I hope that he will be the producer and will be able to carry out *his* notions of the play's stage management, in which I have a great confidence.

[1] Norman McKinnel, the actor, who, finally, did not produce "The Secret Agent."

To William Rothenstein

Oswalds, 17. 12. '20.

DEAREST WILL,

Thanks ever so much for the admirable book of portraits. Every one is a revelation,—especially of course those of the people one knows, if ever so little. Of course, I don't know many: but one has in all the sense of looking at a final expression in art and psychology.

Thank you, dear people, for being good to Jessie when she was in town. I couldn't face the racket of it. Perfectly ridiculous,—but I can't help it. I don't know what to say to people when I do meet them. I came for a day, arriving late and leaving early.

I'll try to take Jessie south in Jany.[1] She needs it, and it may do me good too,—but I doubt it.

I have been writing a series of short prefaces for Heinemann's Ltd. Ed:, which will be published separately also in a 250-copies edition. I will send you a copy. I have done nothing for more than a year and feel as if I couldn't do anything. I'll try, however, to keep in the collar. One must.

To R. B. Cunninghame Graham

Oswalds, 23. 12. '20.

TRÈS CHER AMI,

What to me,—an old friend for whom your prose (with your poetry) and your friendship have been an inherent part of daily existence for so many years,—seems most wonderful in the Cartagena book[2] is its inextinguishable vitality, the unchanged strength of feeling, steadfastness of sympathies and force of expression. I turned the pages with unfailing delight (only regretting that there were so few of them), recognizing at every turn the eye, the voice, the hand of the Captive of Kintafi. As to the soul, you and I, *cher ami,* are too honest to talk of what we know nothing about. Still, after all these years, I think I may venture to say to you this: that if there is such a thing, then yours, don Roberto, is a very fine one, both in what it receives from the world and in what it gives to it. May you ride, firm as ever in the saddle, to the very last

[1] This refers to a trip to Corsica, which took place soon after.

[2] *Cartagena and the Banks of the Sinú,* by R. B. Cunninghame Graham. London. (William Heinemann, 1920.)

moment, *et la lance toujours en arrêt,* against the Enemy, whom you have defied all your life!

He is a multitude, for who can count the follies and meannesses of suffering mankind? He is probably invincible. But what of it! Could I wish you a better fate?

Je vous embrasse.

Veuillez présenter mes devoirs les plus fidèles et les plus respectueux à Madame votre Mère.

Give my most affectionate good wishes to Mrs. Dummett, with my thanks for her letter.

To Hugh Walpole

Oswalds.
26. 12. '20.

DEAREST HUGH,

I was very deeply touched by your letter and I am grateful to you for the impulse which prompted you to put your feelings (which are infinitely precious to me) into words so simple and so direct.

Your friendship is, of course, part of my reward for some years of honest toil which sought not the favour of men and yet without it would have been a waste of barren effort. And in so far I have perhaps deserved it. But for the warmth of your personal, for that genuine, friendship which you have extended to all belonging to me thanks are due to a Higher Power which, having made us what we are, has allowed us to come together. And this, my dear Hugh, I feel profoundly.

Jessie and the boys send you their affectionate greetings and good wishes. John goes to Tonbridge on the 21st Jan. and the present programme is for Mr. and Mrs. J. C. to start for the conquest of Corsica on the 23rd.

The Expeditionary Force (composed of two women, two men and one motor car) will remain in the occupation of the country for about three months, after which it will return and the useful distribution of medals (with clasps) will take place. Later the Chief will sit down and count the cost.

B.[orys] will cross over and see us as far as Rouen (2 days) returning via Havre from there. Jessie is improving slowly (but surely) and I am no worse than usual,—except for fits of depression not usual with me and very worrying to look back upon. We shall see each other in town I hope before very long. When do you return? Let us know.

To Christopher Sandeman

Oswalds, 17. 1. '21.

MY DEAR SANDEMAN,

In a few days we depart for Corsica in search of "climate." Had it not been that I really must pull myself together and do some work, we would have tried a tour in Spain—and a small invasion of your sumptuous Hermitage. But it must not be. Not this year at any rate. We are going to settle down for three months in Ajaccio and lead a dull, laborious and God-fearing existence.

Just at the end of last year McKinnel accepted a play of mine.[1] Thus unexpectedly I shall find myself your confrère—*car vous avez tâté des planches*. I foresee for it a "frost" modified—or tempered—by a certain amount of curiosity on the part of a small section of the public; with the conclusion on the part of the critics that "Conrad can't write a play." It is a pretty horrible thing too—but McKinnel is an artist and may prolong the agony for six weeks or so.

My wife sends her kindest regards and hopes very much to see you under our roof in the course of this year. We'll be back here at the end of April. My *âge des folies* is over, which would be satisfactory if it was not for a long (too long) fit of depression which I cannot shake off. Pray think kindly of me and believe in my unalterably affectionate regard.

To Edward Garnett

Oswalds, Bishopsbourne.
Kent, 17. 1. '21.

MY DEAREST EDWARD,

We could not find the Crane[2] article in any printed form (either U. K. or U. S.) and so we have dug out an old type-script. I am awfully sorry for the delay. I agree with your opinion of these "War pieces." Oh yes! They are good. And truly in all the work he left behind him there is nothing that could be dismissed as rubbish. For even the *Third Violet* is merely a characteristic failure.

I am sending you also four Nos. of *L.*[*ondon*] *Mercury*. I have selected them with some care, and in a spirit of scrupulous fairness.

Aubry[3] and I have been talking you over lately here. You must have felt on that particular evening prolonged shudders as if an infinity

[1] "The Secret Agent."
[2] A paper by Conrad reprinted in *Life and Letters*.
[3] G. Jean-Aubry.

of geese had been walking over your grave. (You know the popular saying?) However, we can't help our "effete intellects." Still I found in that Frenchman of Frenchmen more sympathetic understanding of you—the real you—than in any Islander I've ever met. Perhaps you don't know—but at that séance at Brown's you were really great.[1] I am proud of having been discovered by *you* all these years ago.

Jessie sends her dear love. We start on Sunday.

To J. B. Pinker

Splendide Hôtel,
31, Boulevard d'Athènes. Marseille.
Sunday, 30 Jan. '21. 9 P. M.

DEAREST J. B.,

(This is a most horrid pen.)

We arrived here at 5.30 after some more adventures but this time amongst the foothills, where I lost the way trying for a short cut. But we found a magnificent sunset over these wild and barren peaks. Then night set in and we had to lower the car as it were foot by foot under an amazingly starry sky, creeping down in perfect solitude into a sort of purple-black abyss which was in fact the Valley of the Rhone. Eventually we reached Montelimar at about 8 o'clock—all four (Vinten[2] inc[d].) frightfully thirsty with sheer excitement.

Great fun—to look back upon.

For some reason or other the French post refuses to accept parcels of *nougat* for the U. K. I suspect it's some of our Customs House fun in the matter of sugar. However, we take all your rations to Corsica.

Pray explain to your Ladies, to whom our love.

To-day skies cloudy but soft. Everything looks promising, J. B.! Throw care to the winds and come out south with punctuality and dispatch. To-morrow I'll have to fly round about embarking my party and "material."

To Eric Pinker

G[d] Hôtel d'Ajaccio & Continental, Ajaccio.
5. 2. 21.

MY DEAR ERIC,

The weather is bad—and no mistake. Cold. Wet. Horrors. A lot

[1] A dinner at Brown's Hotel where Joseph Conrad, J. B. Pinker, Edward Garnett, and G. Jean-Aubry met.

[2] Joseph Conrad's chauffeur.

of rather smart people are staying in this beastly hotel. Amongst others Col. Hunter, the distinguished polo player with a delicate wife and two stylish girls, of whom one is his step-daughter. Also Capt. Abercrombie the great authority on Corsica, of which he is supposed to know more than any other man; history, topography, customs, habits (dirty rather), shooting, fishing, climbing—and everything else you can think of. I haven't cross-examined him yet. There are also a few mature wandering women and a small proportion of (rather better class) frumps. An atmosphere of intense good form pervades the place. Low tones—polite smiles—kind inquiries—small groups.

The exploring of Corsica will be no small undertaking—I can see. The confounded island is bigger than one thought, and wilder too. My wife sends you her kindest regards.

To Edward Garnett

18. 3. '21.
Gd. Hôtel d'Ajaccio, Corse.

DEAREST EDWARD,

I am a prey to remorse for not having thanked you yet for the marine prints you mentioned in your letter to the Audrey-child.[1] It's very dear of you to have thought of me in that particular way.

To read your letter was the greatest pleasure, for you know praise from you would count against the world. For that very reason blame from you causes me a great concern. It may be I failed to understand the *Ascending Effort,*[2] but I did not mean to treat Bourne disrespectfully. The thesis of his book is vitiated by the fact that poetry and religion, having their source in an emotional state, may act and react on each other worthily—whereas "Science" at its amplest (and profoundest) is only the exercise of a certain kind of imagination springing either from facts eminently prosaic or from tentative assumptions of the commonest kind of common sense. And you will admit that Bourne, writing in his slightly grotesque heaviness, made it very difficult to read the whole book in a spirit of impartiality—let alone benevolence. I agree with you about Tchekov, absolutely. But that great and wonderful man did not write his stories in praise of the medical science. Poetical genius must be nourished on knowledge—it can't have too much of it—but you will imagine easily what a poem in praise of knowledge would be

[1] Mrs. Conrad's companion.

[2] *The Ascending Effort,* by George Bourne. Conrad's review of that book had just been reprinted in *Notes on Life and Letters.*

like—even if an Archangel came down from Heaven on purpose to write it for our edification.

Nevertheless I am sorry to have provoked your displeasure. But also pray reflect that I had only a column on the last page of the *Daily Mail* [1]—and that it couldn't either help or hurt Bourne's book. As to myself, I simply said (quite superficially) what I thought, and damaged myself in your opinion—which is punishment enough. Justice is satisfied.

I had no idea you had never read the "Autocracy and War" [2] lucubration. How far all that is! I wish I had your *M. Guardian* [3] article. You are a dear to have made a fuss till they sent you the book; but you cannot doubt that a copy (of the first issue) has been reserved for you. I did not tell Dent to send it to you because I always inscribe your copies and was going to do so on our return from here—which by the by will be at the end of April.

I am glad you like the "Maupassant." I was never satisfied with it, but shall think better of it now. After all, the things in that book—it is not my trade! There's not a single one (with the exception of the Censor) that I haven't done unwillingly—against the grain.

I won't bore you with a relation of the Island of Corsica and its inhabitants. This outing is a success as far as Jessie is concerned. She sends her dear love to you. I am neither the better nor the worse for being here—in health, that is. I would perhaps have done some work if I had stayed at home. But God only knows! Head empty. Feelings as one dead—except the feeling of my unalterable affection for you.

To Mr. and Mrs. Galsworthy

Oswalds, 10 May '21.

DEAREST JACK AND ADA,

I don't believe your heads are swelled. I believe you are pulling my leg,—but anyhow I am pleased that you like your set to be No. 1. But could it have been any other? . . .

Anyhow, dearest Jack, you have written me a letter of the dearest kind. Yes,—talk. But could we talk? Could we recapture the fine (though by no means careless) rapture of the early days? A sense of unreality creeps over all things,—I am speaking for myself,—which a life of industrious, say, stock-broking would not have left behind . . . perhaps!

[1] *Daily Mail,* July 30, 1910.
[2] The paper reprinted in *Notes on Life and Letters.*
[3] *Manchester Guardian.*

John left for school last Friday and I am still missing him horribly. I can't get my teeth into the novel.[1] I am altogether in the dark as to what it is about. I am depressed and exasperated at the same time and I only wish I could say to myself that I don't care. But I do care. A horrid state. Don't forget me in your prayers. You who have never strayed beyond the precincts of the Temple.

To John Galsworthy

Oswalds, June 8th, 1921.

DEAREST JACK,

I have just had your letter and I admit I was a little surprised that McKinnel should have bothered you with my play, which, if he has any doubt about it, need not be produced at all. I assure you quite honestly that though I wouldn't be indifferent to its fate, if it were staged, I will not be at all concerned if he doesn't stage it for some reason or other. I have no great confidence in the art of actors as a body. As far as I can judge, it is as much conventionalized as it ever was in the palmy days of Italian comedy: and as to what the present-day men may make of my play fills me with more dread than curiosity.[2]

I am sure you will believe me, my dear Jack, when I tell you that all the remarks you made on it have been very vividly in my mind while I was putting down on paper line after line. The only question that presented itself to me was as to their weight as against other and more intimate considerations.

My general attitude finally was this: that considering that very likely I will never write another play, that I can't have any pretension to dramatic gifts though I have my own idea as to the artistic reproduction of life, that the rules of any art contain in their summarized expression as much error as truth and also a certain admixture of completely unreasonable prejudice (as for instance in the art of painting, the not quite 100-year-old pronouncement of a famous connoisseur that "a picture to be good should be brown like an old fiddle")—I could allow free play to my temperament, attending only to the plain sense and clear connection of the story which, as a matter of fact, I had ready to my hand, with all its implications (more or less wide) arising not from a conflict of motives or passions but simply from various points of view. I resolved, in short, to write a Conrad play, not straining stage conditions unduly for the sake of originality but stretching

[1] *Suspense.*

[2] It is illuminating to compare the above letter with the letter written to R. B. Cunninghame Graham, December 6, 1897.

them out to my conception for the sake of that freedom (possibly in wrong directions) by which no art is ever injured. The critics and the public will take jolly good care that they don't get too much of it.

This, my dear Jack, is the general answer to what you have said. Strictly speaking it has no value except in so far that it is rooted in human nature fortified by some reflection. As to the particular points, I am in a manner too much at one with you to try to controvert what you say. Indeed I have often felt that not only the Third but the Second Act could come out altogether. After all: why the Professor? Why the Assistant Commissioner? Even Inspector Heat himself would be sufficiently characterized by his appearance in the Third Act, if it were not for the actual subject of the play.

What the subject of "The Secret Agent" is, I am not ready to state in a few words, not because I myself don't know it, but because it is of the sort that does not lend itself to exact definition. All I can say is that the subject is *not* the murder of Mr. Verloc by his wife and what subsequently happens to her. It is all a matter of feeling, without which the existence of Mrs. Verloc's mother as a personage in the play could not be very well justified. For after all what is that old woman doing there? She too could be eliminated: and also Mr. Vladimir? Indeed I was tempted, or I might have been tempted, to begin the play with the three delightful anarchists sitting in the parlour round the fire and Mr. Verloc explaining to them the circumstances which force him to throw a bomb at some building or other, discussing ways and means, and ending the effective scene by taking Stevie by the scruff of the neck, "Come along, youngster, you carry the bomb," and Comrade Ossipon blowing a kiss as they all go out at the door to Mrs. Verloc, who stands horrorstruck in the middle of the stage. Curtain. From there one could go, direct, without changing a word, to the Third Scene of the Fourth Act and on to the end, contriving a rather pretty Guignol play, with no particular trouble.

All this is perfectly direct and certainly would not lag by the way, but it would miss altogether the subject of the play, which in its nature, I mean the play, is purely illustrative. It is because of that nature that I have let it spread itself into scenes, which from the point of action alone may, and obviously do, appear superfluous and detached from the subject. Whereas to my feeling they are all closely to the point.

I admit that I wrote the play to be acted but at the same time I will tell you frankly that I look with no pleasurable anticipation to seeing it on the stage. The mere thought of what a perfectly well-meaning actor may make in the way of conventionalized villain of my Professor, which I assure you is quite a serious attempt to illustrate a mental and

emotional state which had its weight in the affairs of this world, gives me a little shudder.

I can't hope to convince you, dearest Jack, since to your practical remarks the only answer I can make is: feeling. I hope you won't get too bored by all this type.[1] I had to dictate as I can't use my pen very long. I have however a matter which makes me very unhappy which I must tell you of. You can't imagine my disgust with myself and my consternation when I discovered that the article I wrote on you (on the occasion of *M. of P.*[2]) has got left out of the *Life and Letters* vol. What can I do but confess that I had forgotten all about it? Indeed I had forgotten the "Henry James," "Books" and a lot of others. They had to put the texts under my eyes to convince me! When Pinker asked me about you lately, I said: "No, I never wrote anything. Galsworthy wrote an appreciation of my work which I have, but I never wrote about him." Of course they sent me a typed copy of the article in the *Outlook*,—and as soon as I glanced at it, a lot of actual phrases rushed into my memory. My dear, this is not to be explained,—except by a lamentable decay of mental faculties which I did not suppose to be advanced so far as that.

Dent printed 9,000 copies of the vol. Another edition won't be needed for the next two years (if ever). But we are not too late for the Collected Edition, of which *Life and Letters* will be the 18th vol. I have sent a typed copy to America and another to Heinemann with the intimation that it *must* go in.[3] For the moment I can do no more,—except to bite my thumbs with vexation that this thing should have happened. Yet truly I am not very proud of what I wrote. Neither you nor the book get half your due in that article. Still, it was the best I could get at that time from the depths of my admiration.

In the matter of the medallion: since you say definitely that I *ought* to have it done all my doubts as to the propriety of the act must vanish. I'll drop Simson[4] a line, that is if he can and is willing to come down. I dread the ordeal all the same.

What with one thing and another, I don't feel very happy and can only hope my face won't reflect too faithfully the state of my feelings. My bodily sensations are wretched too,—but we will try to brazen it out before the artist. Our dear love.

P. S. I am sending you a copy of the vol. all the same. You must have all my first editions.

[1] All the beginning of the letter was dictated; the rest is in Joseph Conrad's handwriting.

[2] Mr. John Galsworthy's novel, *The Man of Property*.

[3] It was included in the posthumous volume, *Last Essays*.

[4] Mr. Spicer-Simson, the American sculptor.

To J. B. Pinker

Oswalds, 27. '21.

DEAREST J. B.,

The clearest result of my interview with McKinnel is—that he himself never noticed the superfluity of the 3rd act. It is Jack [1] who called his attention to it. He told me this in so many words; a strange confession to make if that act is a "blemish" on the play. I set forth my own theory of relief from gloom to ampleness—to which he listened intelligently. His attitude is by no means obstinate. What seduced him was the advantage of shortening the play and the possibility of dispensing with an actress (the g[rea]t lady) very difficult to find. He is really a very nice fellow. He confessed to me that his partners, though much interested in the play, were somewhat afraid of it. That is excusable. They are all determined to produce it, but they want to do it under the best possible conditions. The idea of staging it at once has been given up. Autumn or early spring are the only times in which to attempt to give the public that treat. In this I agree with him. He has in reserve a light comedy—an Italian thing—to replace Jack's play.[2] The audience was very thin. The thing has no *body* in it. It's mere stage production. Of course it's far from contemptible. But it's neither farce nor comedy nor drama. Its atmosphere is uncertain. It is Jack with all his skill, his talent and his manner but robbed of all earnestness (the underlying righteousness of passion) which give weight and body to his theatrical art. McK. himself was simply admirable. I regretted you were not there with me in the old box. McK. was a delight to watch, but the play left an impression of a fairy tale. Yet it was not "light."

I was with McK. for an hour. He *is* a nice fellow. I reproached him with showing the play and he was quite genuinely surprised and concerned at the view we (you and I) took of it. It was quite touching. In the end before leaving I swore him to secrecy and imparted to him the news of the "Comedy." [3] The upshot is that I have sent it to his *private* address, (he'll read it to-day). I hope you will not be annoyed with me. It was an impulse—and he is really an artist. Of his discretion I am certain. Moreover, I did not tell him I was the translator. On the title page Mr. X. is the translator. I am going on with the novel and am pretty full of it. No other news whatever.

[1] John Galsworthy.

[2] "A Family Man," a comedy in three acts by John Galsworthy, performed at the Comedy Theatre.

[3] His translation of "The Book of Job," the comedy by the Polish author, Bruno Winaver. Conrad's translation has never yet appeared either on the stage or in print.

To Bruno Winaver

Oswalds, Aug. 10th, 1921.

DEAR MR. WINAVER,

I am writing to you in English this time, as I am confident that you know the language well and it is safer for me to dictate.

I must begin by thanking you for the little book of satirical pieces which I read with great enjoyment and in that sympathetic mood which your work arouses in me. As a matter of fact, I like all the pieces, both as point of view and as expression.

Now as to the play. As I have anticipated I have not been able to find a translator. I did not even know very well how to begin to look for one. Of course there are translating and typewriting offices where they would translate from any language, but to deliver your play to that fate was not to be thought of. Therefore I took the matter in hand myself, notwithstanding the arrears of my own work in the way of preparing my Collected Edition, of which ten volumes have appeared by now, and the fact that I have a long novel in hand which causes me much labour and worry.

The work now is finished [1] and I am sending you a copy by registered post. I don't for a moment suppose that you will be pleased with the translation. No author is ever pleased with a translation of his work. That cannot be expected. The first reading will no doubt exasperate you, but I am confident that after a time you will discover an amount of fidelity to your thought and even your expression which you would not have been able to find in any other translation more accurately verbal. You will notice no doubt that it is strictly idiomatic and you may take it from me that the idioms are absolutely correct and employed in strict accordance with your artistic intention. My guiding idea was to make the work acceptable to a theatrical audience. In one or two places you will discover a certain shortening of speeches, but nothing material has been missed. I have also summarized rather than translated the preliminary descriptive matter, leaving just enough to guide the phrasing, so as to make the thought more accessible to the English or American public, and I have taken the liberty to invent names for certain characters, in order to make them acceptable to the ears of the audience.

This being done, I showed the play to several people capable of judging, not one of them being a dramatic author but any of them being possible as an intelligent member of the theatrical public. All the opinions were very favourable and indeed, I may say, very appreciative.

[1] The first draft had been finished on June 25, 1921.

To Bruno Winaver

Oswalds, Oct. 23rd. 1921.

MY DEAR SIR,

Thanks for your last letter in which you show your interest in the adaptation of my novel *The Secret Agent* for the stage, which has been done by myself in Four Acts, of which the Second is in two Scenes and the Fourth in three, I am sorry to say. By Scenes I mean here what in French is called *tableaux*. It was impossible to avoid that, at any rate for me, but one of our most clever producers (*metteurs en scène*) assured me that it could be managed without much difficulty. However, the play has been hung up for more than a year now, McKinnel, one of our new actor-managers, having had an option on it for some time. But apparently he was afraid of beginning his career with it. He made three failures with other plays, and I imagine that his funds are now exhausted and that he will never produce it now. His option terminates at the end of this year. This has been a very bad time for theatres and the improvement is not very marked yet.

I am sorry to have no news to give you about our joint undertaking.[1] One copy is in America by now and the other is here of course, but I have not asked Pinker what precisely he is doing and he has volunteered no statement; therefore I beg you to arm yourself with patience and dismiss for the moment all optimistic thoughts, as I have done. You may however be assured that no opportunity will be neglected and no opening untried. You may also be certain that my own play will not be allowed to get in the way. The two things are very different; and, frankly, I don't care very much whether "The Secret Agent" gets on the stage or not. I have lost all interest in it by now and when McKinnel's option expires it will be put into a drawer.

I am, however, having 30 copies of it privately printed for distribution amongst friends, and I will send you one as soon as they are ready.[2] But as to your most kind and flattering proposal to translate it for the Polish stage, I must first explain to you the whole situation.

More than a year ago I made over all my copyrights, for translation in Polish and Russian, to my cousin, Miss Angela Zagórska, whose address is: 5 ul. Wilcza, Warsaw. Therefore I must refer you to her for all arrangements, literary and others, connected with the translation and production of that play in Poland. The property of all translation

[1] The translation by Joseph Conrad of Bruno Winaver's play "The Book of Job."

[2] The edition was actually one of fifty-two copies.

rights in Poland and Russia has been made over to her by legal instrument and she may dispose of them as she thinks fit. All I can venture to say here is that nothing would please me more than to have "The Secret Agent" translated by you and to express an earnest hope that you two will come to a definite understanding on the matter of staging it in Poland.

Would you care to get in communication with her, tell her confidentially of our recent relations, and of course show her this letter? I don't think I will warn her beforehand that she may hear from you because I do not know how you may look at the situation.

She has written to me lately to say she is very anxious to see "The Secret Agent" in its stage form. Therefore I will send her a copy by the same post by which I will send you yours.

Thanks very much for your friendly promise to send me your new fantastic play "FF Rays." I am looking forward impatiently to its arrival. A fantastic play is a dangerous thing, generally speaking: and I am very curious to see what you have made of it. My warmest wishes for its success with the Cracow public.

To R. B. Cunninghame Graham

Oswalds, 6 Dec. '21.

TRÈS CHER AMI,

I ought to have written to you long before this to thank you for the letter you sent me from Scotland. You must forgive me for not telling you at once how deeply I felt every word of it. It would not have been an easy task and I do not know that I can do it at all.

Ever since I saw you in London I have been seedy and often in pain; which I would not mind much but for the depression (consequent on the inability to work seriously), which I cannot somehow shake off. Your letter so full of friendship and appreciation was a great moral tonic. I am glad that those two early works have kept enough of their quality to bring me such a letter from you. Their existence is just as old as our friendship; and I can assure you that I never wrote a book since without many mental references to you, of whom alone almost amongst my readers I always thought that *he* will understand.

You have been one of my moral supports through my writing life; and this latest letter I had from you made me happy in a particular way. To write it was a true friend's thought.

Yours with the greatest affection.

To J. B. Pinker

Oswalds, Jan. 19th, 1922.

DEAREST J. B.,

Thank you very much for your good letter of this morning. I have had a bad night, I can't get rid of that spasmodic sort of cough, though I have been taking drugs and attending to Fox's instructions most scrupulously. I think it is no use deluding myself any longer with the notion of being able to run up and see you in town before you depart for the States. I don't think it would be prudent on my part; the more so that I am upon the whole feeling somewhat better and can work a little. I am also comparatively free from gouty symptoms and I think I ought to nurse those good dispositions for every reason, practical and sentimental.

I would suggest you should leave to me the procuring of the "Black Mate" [1] text. I can do that through Wise [2] while you are away. I am surprised at the length of the thing. My feeling about it is that there will be nothing actually disgraceful in its inclusion in my collected editions (for that is what its publication in book form would ultimately mean) but it would complicate my literary history in a sort of futile way. I don't remember whether I told you that I wrote that thing in '86 for a prize competition, started, I think, by *Tit-Bits*. It is an extraneous phenomenon. My literary life began privately in 1890 [3] and publicly in 1895 with *Almayer's Folly*, which is regarded generally as my very first piece of writing. However, the history of the "Black Mate," its origin etc., etc., need not be proclaimed on housetops, and *Almayer's Folly* may keep its place as my first serious work. Therefore I agree to your proposal, with the proviso that should *The Rover* turn out a longer piece of work than we anticipate, we will try to do without the "Black Mate." This on the assumption that the new volume of stories must be 60,000 words *at the very least.*

My dear love to you all.

[1] "The Black Mate" is one of the tales included in the posthumous volume, *Tales of Hearsay*.

[2] T. J. Wise.

[3] He means 1889.

To Mrs. Galsworthy

Oswalds, Bishopsbourne, Kent.
9th Feb., '22.

DEAREST ADA,

Your wire was a great grief. We hope dear Jack's cold has no relation to any sort of 'flu. I was laid up for nearly a month with some form of it and I felt the disappointment of your cancelled visit with the peculiar invalid's acuteness of emotion. For if you had come you would have inaugurated, so to speak, my first coming downstairs after what seemed to be ages.

As I know that dear Jack's colds are no amateurish interludes pray drop us a word how he is getting on. I suppose he was producing "Justice" himself and that adds to his anxiety. Theatres, I think, are most dangerous places.—I don't mean morally but as microbe menageries. I suppose a complete collection could be found in any theatre. But perhaps I take a jaundiced view! I am generally fractious yet and depressed.

I have done no work to speak of for months,—such is the dreadful truth which I conceal from as many people as possible.

Our dearest love to you both.

To Eric Pinker

Canterbury,
Feb. 10, 1922.

11 A.M.

DEAR ERIC,

I am not fit to come up to-day to see you as I was most anxious to do in my concern for you all in this bereavement which I too feel more deeply than anyone outside his family can do. Twenty years' friendship and for most of that time in the constant interchange of the most intimate thoughts and feelings created a bond as strong as the nearest relationship. But you know enough to understand the depth of our grief here and our sense of irreparable loss. There are no words of comfort for such a blow. I can only assure you of my affectionate friendship. Our anxious thoughts are with you all. But to think of poor Œnone is harrowing. Please keep us informed. If you feel you would like to talk with me and can bear the idea of coming to this house, where he was loved and honoured as if it were his own, pray do so as early or

as late as you like and you could be back home in town by noon to-morrow. I hope to be able to come up on Monday prepared to stay the night so as to see you at your own time after business hours.

With our love.[1]

To F. N. Doubleday

Oswalds,
Feb. 19th, 1922.

DEAR MR. DOUBLEDAY,

I need not tell you how profoundly I feel the loss of J. B. Pinker, my friend of twenty years' standing, whose devotion to my interests and whose affection borne towards myself and all belonging to me were the greatest moral and material support through nearly all my writing life.

During the years of the war our intimacy had become very close. For the last two years he was very frequently staying in our house and I learned more and more to appreciate in him qualities which were not perhaps obvious to the world, which looked upon him mainly as a successful man. It is certain that the value of my connection with him cannot be wholly or truly expressed in terms of money.

My sense of loss, very acute now, will always abide with me, whatever alleviation time may bring to the present distress of my feelings. Eric Pinker, who understood well the extent of my affection for his father, came down here two days after the news reached the family. He spent a few hours with me in my study and seemed to derive some comfort from that visit. We did not talk business on that occasion except in so far that I asked him to continue to look after my affairs since it was his resolve to go on with the business if he could be certain of the support of the majority of his father's clients. I gather from many letters I have received that this will be the case. I have known Eric since he was seven years old, and as J. B. Pinker and I often talked our children over I know pretty well his character and abilities. I have the most favourable opinion of them and have always liked him personally.

I do not know that there are any negotiations left pending between you and J. B. P. The last agreement I signed was for the volume of plays and nothing, I suppose, has arisen since then. Eric, though not a partner, seems to have been altogether in his father's confidence and, apparently, is aware of everything that has been done; but in any case

[1] The above message was sent by telegram and refers to the death of J. B. Pinker.

I feel that my affairs in America need give me no concern since your invariable kindness, forethought and interest expressed so often in word and deed assure me that they are in the hands of a friend.

This profound conviction, dear Mr. Doubleday, is a source of comfort to me; for it is not "agreements" but the certainty of friendly appreciation in those closely associated with his work that give confidence and support to a writer.

With our kindest regards.

To Allan Wade

Oswalds,
April 4th, 1922.

MY DEAR WADE,

Thank you for your good letter which I have read with great interest. All your remarks are well grounded, especially as to the 4 Scenes of the last Act.[1] In Warsaw, where I believe this play is going to be performed before long, the notion is to have the stage divided by a partition showing the shop and the parlour, with some modifications in disposing of the furniture; as for instance Mr. Verloc not being visible to the audience as he lies dead on the sofa, and things like that. There are also other changes in the Polish version of which I have only heard by letter. I should like very much to see it. I think I will write to the very clever adapter and ask him to send me a copy.

This play has been criticized by several people. McKinnel had it for a year, but as you know his management was a succession of failures and he obviously lacked courage to put this play on. I am certain that it could not have been worse than it was for him. On the other hand he might have had a success of curiosity; which would have been better than the series of three dead failures with which he began his management.

The telescoping of the First Act cannot of course be denied, but I ask myself whether it is deadly? I should not like to touch that because it was difficult to do and I do not see any other way of explaining the situation. I wonder whether the public would bother their heads about the time Winnie has been away. As to the visit of the three anarchists, well, yes, it may appear to be what you say, but I ask myself whether it is not justified by the fact that it establishes the psychology of the whole play absolutely. I admit I don't know how things look on the stage. On the other hand, after a certain amount of reflection on these

[1] This refers to "The Secret Agent."

matters it seems to me that it mainly depends on the manner. Almost anything can be got down people's throats on the stage.

The Third Act, which is Lady Mabel's Drawing-room, I put there to give relief; and, though I don't know very well how to defend it, yet I stick to it after much meditation. It is a matter of feeling; and, after all, apart from its freeing the atmosphere a little from the general horror of this damned thing, it is a drawing-room scene which cannot be said to suffer from banality; and it seems to me that it is not altogether outside the action.

Reverting for a moment to the "telescoped" effect of the First Act, I wonder if it could not be lessened by, for instance, letting the anarchists come in and establish themselves (as their habit was) round Mr. Verloc's fireplace and then, after they had talked for a while, letting Winnie return with her brother. After she has gone upstairs, taking her brother with her, the conversation would be brought round on the lines that produced that effect on the boy. I don't think there would be any difficulty about that, but I must tell you that the play since I fabricated it has become so real to me that I cannot imagine any change in it without it appearing a most shocking thing.

Of course the only distinctive quality of this play is the fact that it is excessively Conradian. It may have a *succès de curiosité,* which of course can never be very paying, but may, at any rate, prevent a dead loss.

I am delighted to see that you like the Second Act. I suppose you mean both Scenes with two personages in each. From the letter I had from Warsaw I see that my adapter, an experienced craftsman, managed to cram the essence of the Second Scene in some way or other into the Third Act. How he did it God only knows. I cannot imagine it myself and I do not feel at all easy in my mind about it. However, what happens there is not my affair at all. Neither does their division of the stage in the last Act appeal very much to my sense of the fitness of things. That sort of thing is associated in my mind with farces. I can see the difficulty of the changes and I was worried about it before I began to write the Fourth Act. It was, however, Vernon, who was then associated with Vedrenne, who encouraged me by telling me not to worry, and that he would manage it all right.

I have got my wife to lend me her copy of the play to show to your friend, who, I suppose, is a man we can trust! It is the only copy I have in the house.

Early last year I translated a Polish play which the author had sent me in book form, and which had some success over there. I do not like to add to your occupations, but I wonder whether you would mind looking at it and telling me what you think of it and whether it is at all pos-

sible on a West European or American stage? But if you are busy or do not want to bother your head about it you may send it back to me.

But I would consider it a great favour if your wife would cast her eye over it. It is a comedy not devoid of ideas, which are presented lightly and with a certain *esprit*. Will you present my request to Mrs. Wade *avec mes hommages les plus respectueux*.

My wife joins me in kindest regards to you both.

P. S. I am addressing you from bed where the gout has kept [me] four days now.

To Allan Wade

Oswalds, April 9th, 1922.

MY DEAR WADE,

Thank you very much for your letter of the 7th. I feel compunctions at taking up so much of your time and your thought. It is indeed very kind and friendly of you to take so much interest in the fate of those two plays.

Your commendation of my dialogue flatters me exceedingly, the more so that the effect you approve is the outcome of great care and of a very determined purpose to approach colloquial conversation as much as possible. To learn from you that I have been successful is a great comfort. As a matter of fact, I think that even in my novels the dialogue is never very literary, unless the thing becomes unavoidable or is justified in some other way. The doubt however in my mind was always whether my dialogue, however dramatic in form, responds to the "requirements of the stage"—which at times appear to me as a great and august mystery, and at others vanish, as it were, before my meditations, into thin air.

Your care of my wife's copy has touched her very much. I don't think it would have been endangered, but even had it been mislaid or lost by some mischance I could have, I daresay, replaced it. Why I sent the printed copy is because I mistrust the correctness of the typed text; and as a matter of fact the play reads better in print.

I am glad, however, that you got in touch with Eric Pinker, who is carrying on his father's business and has all my confidence. I had a note from him saying that no negotiations in which he has been engaged in America are advanced enough to be of the slightest obstacle to any proposal that could be made by Mr. Campbell or any of Mr. Campbell's clients. Pray address him direct on any matters of fact which you may want to know, since whatever is arranged he will have to come in at the end as representing me on the business side.

Of course it is a great comfort to see you take that friendly attitude towards the author. The mere notion of having to snip, readjust, fit in and alter that stuff, already cut out and put together after much anxious thought, is enough to make me shudder. This sensitiveness, however, may be simply the result of my physical state which is not good. I am dictating this in bed.

Still, the dreadful material difficulties of the 4th Act are always present to my mind. And yet Vernon who, so to speak, hung over me while I was writing that act did make very light of them apparently. Whenever he came down to see me at Spring Grove he used to draw little sketches with a bit of a pencil on a scrap and the whole thing seemed much easier than cutting bread and butter for afternoon tea.

I hope the repeated reading of *The Secret Agent* won't disgust you too much. I simply can't look at the thing any more. As to the comedy (with the absurd title) for which I have an inexplicable fondness as if it were my own,[1] Mrs. Wade's criticism is perfectly just. The Third Act is certainly the worst of the three, at any rate in the reading. I always felt that. Having undertaken the job to translate it you may imagine I know the blessed thing backwards. But on reflection there are things that do not look hopeless on the stage. There are good scenes, using the word scene in the French sense. The dismay of that precious gang may be made very funny; then the scene between Herup and the policeman, if it is acted properly, has good elements of comedy that may get over the footlights all right; and at the end, when Herup, seeing all those people staring at him, forgets himself and in his workman's clothes begins to address them as if he were lecturing some students, the scene has got a certain value. His exit too with the remark of old Kurdys that this strange person (who holds in his hands all their reputations) wouldn't take a tip is extremely good. My opinion is that this is the Act which will require most acting, the most careful adjustment of effects and a most accurate judgment of what I may call tempo, since there are certain delicate shades which may be lost by acceleration. It certainly won't play itself; whereas the Third Act, as to which I share your opinion absolutely, is comparatively simple, if the actors can only be induced not to accentuate the farcical characteristics towards the end. As the play has been left in my hands by Winaver to do the best I can with it I will tell you at once that I am very much of your way of thinking as to trying whether the Stage Society will take it up. It's very good of you to propose to act in that matter. I confess I should like this thing to get out behind the footlights, especially if there is a chance of it being taken by Mr. Campbell's American. Otherwise a performance by the Stage Society has always struck me as a sort of cheerful funeral cere-

[1] It refers to Bruno Winaver's *The Book of Job*.

mony, or at any rate as a certificate of unfitness to live as far as the large public is concerned. As to the identity of "Mr. X." I shouldn't like it to be proclaimed from housetops, but it need not be made a mystery of. Do you think the disclosure would help the chances of the play? What I would like is that when it gets as far as the bill stage Mr. X. should remain, while at the same time everybody would know who Mr. X. is. It would fit the spirit of comedy that "All London" should know it—which would still leave about five million people in the dark.

Pray note, my dear Wade, that the whole thing is one single trap for the easy-going, unharrowed, after-dinner sentiment. With perhaps, the sole exception of the wife, who is not made odious, every single person is sympathetic—the sympathetic burglar-sharper, the sympathetic professor-workman, the precious Tola, down to that ass Klotz and the music-hall ditty writer with his German alias, who is simply fair game. And yet I feel that the acceptance, let alone the success, of that thing, will hang on a hair: the creation of a responsive mood in the audience. On the other hand, if the hair holds it may give the play a real good chance.

Give your wife my dutiful regards and thanks for reading the play.

To C. J. Fehbuts

Oswalds, 9. 5. '22.

DEAR SIR,

In truth I think the story is simple rather than subtle. A thing like that cannot go on for ever; and Rita with her greater maturity, greater experience of the world and in her perfect sincerity in the face of the given situation sees it clearly.[1]

A connection of that kind would have spelt ruin for a young fellow of 19 without fortune or position, or any young fellow for the matter of that. Had R. been merely sensual and selfish she could have kept George chained to her by his passion. Rita is what she is; but whatever she is, she is honest as the day. By going away beyond his reach she gives him the supreme proof of her love, stronger than mere passion, stronger than the fear of her own and of his suffering. That is all there is to it.

To Charles Chassé

Oswalds, June 21st, 1922.

MY DEAR SIR,

I hoped to have answered your letter before, but my hand remains disabled and so I must dictate these few lines in English.

[1] This refers to *The Arrow of Gold*.

The only passages and articles relating to Poland I ever wrote are all to be found in the *Record* and in the *Notes on Life and Letters,* so I suppose you have seen them all except one short story [1] which appeared years ago in the *Cambridge and Oxford Magazine* but not in any collection in book form. My intimate friend M. Jean-Aubry, the well known critic of art and letters and a much appreciated lecturer in many countries, has been on a visit to us yesterday. I mentioned to him your letter and he told me that when last in Paris he had seen the secretary of the revue *Pologne* and that they had accepted his translation of that short story of which the title is "Prince Roman." M. Aubry has translated much of my work already and is engaged in doing more for the complete edition which is now being published by the *Nouvelle Revue Française.*

In answer to the direct question, I have to say that the peasants who sacked the house of my granduncle Captain Nicholas Bobrowski were Ukrainians, that is the Ruthenians of the Southern Provinces of the old Republic.

To Eric Pinker

Oswalds, 30. 6. '22.

MY DEAR ERIC,

I write according to promise, but it's mainly to thank you for sparing me a very disagreeable time, for Vernon wired to me this morning that after hearing what you had to say as to my views he found it unnecessary to come and see me. I am really very much obliged to you, my dear Eric, for I must say that, though determined to assert my complete freedom and the absence of any obligation, I did not look forward with any pleasure to the interview.

Vernon then being out of the way I have given a most careful and anxious consideration to the Calthrop proposal and I see many reasons against it. First of all to deal with mere superstitions: McKinnel is not a lucky man and the Aldwych is an unlucky theatre, whether it is because it is furthest east or because somebody has cast a spell on it, I don't know.

And now to talk sense. My fear is that the play may sink unhonoured and unsung, which morally speaking would be a great disaster for me. I have put to you verbally the considerations that make me fear such an inglorious event. In July and August the principal critics will be replaced probably by their understudies in the press. The Conrad public will be

[1] "Prince Roman," now included in *Tales of Hearsay.*

away from town too; and not only the Conrad public but the most intelligent part of play-goers, who, at any rate, have heard of me as a novelist of long standing and some reputation and, being theatre-goers, would be interested enough to see what I had done in that medium. I have reason to think, from correspondence and other sources, that my name, if not my work, is known in a good many spheres. The play in itself is not inept—that is, it does not contain the seeds of an obvious failure. It is not a mere exercise in intellect, or in style, or in delicate subtlety, or in over-refined sentiment, as poor Henry James's were, who never dealt with a situation but only with the atmosphere of it. On the other hand, in its innermost quality it is as Conradian as anything I ever have written; therefore I may hope for a *succès de curiosité:* say an existence of six to eight weeks, which would satisfy me if associated with a certain amount of recognition as expressed in varied criticism and discussion. (I may of course be the most deluded of mortals in that respect but that is how I feel.) A money success I never dreamt of. For that of course it would be necessary for the same people to come over and over again, and this for a play like "The Secret Agent" cannot be expected; unless indeed there was some marvellous acting, on the part of some principals, which would fascinate people.

A minor but vexing consideration (don't laugh) occurs to me that my personal friends, say twenty to thirty people, who had read the play and would certainly have liked to see it on the stage, would miss their only chance by being out of town. It's all very fine for those fellows who have perhaps a dozen plays in their little bag, but this one is my all and I really think that if it comes out it must be given every possible chance.

I have written to you at such great length because, my dear Eric, I don't want you to think I am captious or merely capricious, or even funky. Indeed I hate to raise all these objections to something which you are arranging for me. But there is also this: a *succès de curiosité,* well marked and discussed, would not make an attempt in the U. S. impossible; whereas a failure in the dead season would close that field to us completely. But of course all those circumstances I have put before you may be appreciated differently. However, we shall see each other in a few days and you will then give me your opinion.

To John Galsworthy

Oswalds, 7. 8. '22.

DEAREST JACK,

I am disgusted with myself but I assure you that while I was finishing

the novel[1] (begun last October) I was not in a state to tackle the simplest letter. I don't know that I am much better mentally now, but, at any rate, the novel is finished, even to the last word of the revision. It's gone out of the house: and it's like waking up out of a nightmare of endless effort to get out of a bog. I was laid up 5 times between the New Year Day and the end of June!

For the last two days I have been reading the *Saga,*[2] which makes a wonderful volume. The consistency of inspiration, the unfailing mastery of execution, the variety of shades and episodes have impressed me tremendously. It's a great art achievement, in which every part is worthy of the whole in a great creative unity of purpose.

How fresh *The Man of Property* reads! For that book I have a special affection. I had not read it for a couple of years or more, and I was fascinated by the constant felicity of presentation, portraits, groups, scenes. The lines stand traced for all time: as to the details filling in that great conception they are, all through the *Saga,* a source of delight to a craftsman. The preface is *magistrale* in its conciseness. Could not have been better.

The reading of these pages has been a source of great comfort in a time when I did want to be taken out of myself. It was like stepping out of an arid desert into an enchanted valley. Ever since finishing *The Rescue* (two years or more ago) I have had, in one way or another, a pretty bad time. The reaction from the war, anxiety about Jessie, the growing sense of my own deficiencies have combined to make anything but a bed of roses for my aging bones. My very soul is aching all over. My fault of course.

Our dear love to you both.

To Edward Garnett

22. 8. '22.

DEAREST EDWARD,

I had no doubt you would feel deeply Hudson's death.[3]

I was never intimate with him, but I always thought of him with real affection. The secret of his charm both as a man and as a writer remains impenetrable to me. A little uncanny. Yet there was nothing more *real* in letters—nothing less tainted with the conventions of art;

[1] *The Rover.*
[2] John Galsworthy's *The Forsyte Saga.*
[3] W. H. Hudson.

I mean the most legitimate. He was a nature-production himself and had something of its fascinating mysteriousness. Something unique is gone out of the world. Yes, my dear Edward, we will miss him—you of course more than I. But then I am much older than you and begin to feel resigned.

Do, my dear fellow, come down next Thursday 31st—isn't it? On the 30th I must lunch with Galsworthy, whom I have not seen for ages. Strange fellows these Harmsworths! It is as if they had found Aladdin's lamp. Strange still to think that I had been more intimate with N [1] than with Hudson. Funny world this.

To Hugh R. Dent

Oswalds.
Sept. 12, 1922.

MY DEAR MR. DENT,

I have your letter, for which thanks.

As regards the article on Hudson suggested by Dr. Smyth of the *Times* Literary Supplement, I am the last person to write an "authoritative" paper on W. H. H. I don't suppose I have met Hudson ten times in my life, though when we did meet he was always extremely kind and friendly to me. It is six or seven years, or perhaps more, since I saw Hudson last. We never corresponded on any subject of general interest, and I have not a scrap of his writing in my possession.

The person eminently fitted to write an authoritative article is, of course, Edward Garnett, Hudson's friend for more than twenty years, one of his earliest appreciators, long before the public (or for that matter the publishers) recognized the high quality of Hudson's work, which he did his utmost to make known to the world. They saw each other frequently and, I believe, corresponded regularly. I do not suppose there is another man who has such a profound knowledge of Hudson's work as Edward Garnett. I understand that E. G. is planning a study of Hudson which would be exactly the thing for the *Times* Literary Supplement and for your own purposes, in the way of "authority" and sympathy. You could do no better than suggest Garnett to your friends in America for the work which I absolutely decline to undertake.

P. S.—E. Garnett's address is 19, Pond Place, Chelsea, S. W.

[1] Lord Northcliffe.

To Eric Pinker

Oswalds
Oct. 8th, 1922.

MY DEAR ERIC,

This is only to tell you that the more I think of our interview with Benrimo the more I feel pleased with it—looking, of course, at B. as the producer of the play. He has talked intelligently and I do not think that he will act foolishly, as it sometimes happens. I assume that nothing is likely to turn up to interfere with the completion of the business side of this affair. Will you, my dear Eric, ask Unwin to send me two copies of the *Arrow?* As B. has already a copy of the *Agent* and I promised him a book I will send him one of the *Arrows* from the author.

I don't know, my dear, whether it ever struck you that there is a very possible play in the *Arrow*. I don't mean a play that could be cut out of the text as it stands in the book, but made of the tale itself and especially out of its atmosphere. I think if it ever came to it I could convey it into the writing and I am damned if I don't think that that man is quite capable to put it on the stage. Personally I feel that if that thing could be done at all I would sign an agreement with the Devil himself for the chance; and think the experiment worth trying. It's a fact that a woman like Rita has never been put on the stage, and there are many facts in her story which are merely indicated in the book (and some that are not in it at all) which could be used for the purposes of the action. I can almost see it all in seven scenes distributed amongst three acts. It is possible, of course, that I am labouring under a delusion. But I think you know me well enough not to be frightened by these confidences. Anyway you may take it that I am not likely to drop serious work to indulge in delusions. I got into this train of thought simply because you have brought me in contact with a man who, apparently, seems to understand my conception of stagecraft—at any rate, in this instance.

Then, pursuing the same train of thought a little further, there is the drama contained in *Western Eyes* of which, as a matter of fact, I have the first and last act in my head very definitely indeed, and very different from the ideas of professional adaptors. I have heard one or two of that tribe talking to me of what they would do, and it seemed to me very asinine talk. There is a fascination in doing a thing like that over again in another medium; that is, if one were certain of intelligent interpretation. And if later people were suddenly to begin to say "Here is Conrad been writing those blessed tales and now, after thinking some of

them over for fifteen years, he attempts to show us how they ought to be told on the stage"—well, my career as a whole is exceptional enough to have that evolution in it, too, recognized as a manifestation of creative art.

I hope you are getting on in setting your camp in the London wilderness.

To Benrimo

Oswalds.
Oct. 27, 1922.

DEAR MR. BENRIMO,

I hope you got my letter sent by rail this morning in good time. I asked Pinker to collect it at the station and send it on to you at once.

I confess to you I am very frightened at the Professor. I trust you have put into him some conception of his part. It cannot be denied that not a single one of my directions as to tone and expression has been, I won't say carried out, but even so much as indicated by him, during that rehearsal. I know that *you* have formed a right conception of the part. The question is whether you will be able to perform the miracle of making him see it between this and the first performance.

Inspector Heat is very young and physically too tall and not heavy enough. His very voice is young. For goodness' sake put a heavy moustache on him or something, and make him bear himself like a man of forty-five at least. He must have a certain stolidity and conviction. Pray think of the last scene of the last Act when he becomes a symbolic figure, as it were, when facing the Professor;—and later when he has got to hold the middle of the stage in silence, contemplating in sombre thoughtfulness the crazy Mrs. Verloc crouching on the floor while the crowd murmurs outside. There is a tableau there which must not fail because it is on that impression the audience will leave the theatre.

When rehearsing the last Act in the scene between Heat and Mrs. Verloc the following corrections should be made. Instead of Heat saying with a (low whistle): "Exactly. And your brother now, what's he like? A thick-set dark chap"—he ought to say as follows:

Heat (low whistle): "Exactly. And your brother now, what's he like? A thick-set fair chap." And Winnie would say:

W. (with fervour): "Oh no, that must be the thief. Stevie's slight and *dark*."

Will your charming secretary see that the copies of their parts are altered accordingly?

Will you please tell Miss Lewis that she has got into the character of Winnie in the First Act very well? Only beg her from me to keep

all emotional inflections out of her voice altogether, when addressing either her Mother or Verloc. She is a woman who has schooled herself into the part of Verloc's wife for the sake of Stevie. Her emotion only breaks out after she has been driven to despair and murder: when she may put as much emotional force into her acting as she can; which will be then the more effective.

To Richard Curle

Oswalds.
Oct., 1922.

DEAREST DICK,

Herewith the pamphs.

I wired you to-day: "Next Thursday."

I do not think that it would be feasible to arrange the visit to the theatre afterwards. I saw only Act One yesterday. They went through the motions with their parts in their hands. It *was* promising. M. Lewis will do. The boy playing Stevie is excellent!

What was most pleasant was the atmosphere of belief in the play and the evident anxiety to do their best for it.

I am looking forward very much to the lunch. You know how I prize women's appreciation, which, for a man not specializing in sentiment, is about the greatest reward one's sincerity can obtain.

Suppose we lunch at one? I will have to leave you at 2.30 so as not to keep those people waiting. We could *meet* at 12.30.

To Henry Arthur Jones

3 Nov., '22.
Hotel Curzon,
London, W.

CHER MAÎTRE—À NOUS TOUS,

Let me thank you with all possible warmth for your kind note of welcome to the "youngest" dramatist.

This kindness, so characteristic of you, has touched me deeply: it brought vividly to my mind the day when dear Henry James presented me to you at the Reform Club, the friendliness of your words of appreciation which I was so proud to hear, and the grip of your hand.

If I deserve this word of welcome at all it is perhaps by this:—that

I can assure you that this work, undertaken of course from impulse, is the product of earnest meditation,—even in its defects,—and not of airy self-confidence.

Let me subscribe myself with real gratitude
Affectionately yours.

Will you give my affectionate thanks to Mrs. Thorne for her precious autograph? It is much like her delightful self.

To Henry Arthur Jones

Oswalds.
7. 11. '22.

MY VERY DEAR SIR,

As you see one of my very few virtues is the virtue of obedience. It was very comforting to read your words of appreciation, where appreciation could be given. Of course, I felt at times the play doomed even before I had a report from my wife,—who, however, was hopeful.

But even a play written by an angel could not have stood up against the weight of a unanimous press. The most piously disposed would have been scared off. There is something awe-inspiring in a hostile cry from many throats in unison on a single note. Let this then be *la mort sans phrases*. I ought to have said *condemnatory* rather than hostile, for of course there was no hostility. Rather the reverse. I was very sensible of that while wading through the press-cuttings,—a thing I have not done for many years. What, however, is really painful in this affair is the thought of loyal work wasted, of men and women devoted to their art and to whom the success of the play would have meant so much more than it could have meant to myself.

Voilà. One does not think till too late—and then comes remorse, a decent thing in so far that it is much less comfortable than callousness, but otherwise of no great account. So I am not boasting; I am just telling you in a spirit of repentance and for the good of my soul. A sort of *confession après la mort*. That situation, though pregnant with grim irony, could not be presented on any stage. It would be misunderstood and would ruin the play.

It is most kind of you to ask me to dine. Just now I am really not well and like Mr. Verloc "want to be looked after." It has nothing to do with the grimness of the situation. I was feeling far from well even before the play was accepted. May I write to you when I feel fit to come up? And I hope we may have Mrs. Thorne for company. I am afraid

I shocked and disgusted her on Friday by my manners and speeches, which fell far short of that serene amenity which marks the behaviour of a *vrai homme du monde* and, strangely enough, the faces of the hairdressers' dummies. Perhaps because both are strangers to remorse. My humble apologies and my repentant love to her.

I am, dear Sir, your ever grateful and affectionate.

To Eric Pinker

Oswalds.
Nov. 11th, 1922.

MY VERY DEAR ERIC,

I had seen very well how much you took to heart the success of the play and all I can say is that you are a good friend to have by one in a tight place. I felt that all the time.

Thanks for the two letters. The one from [Arnold] Bennett coming from a man of distinct achievement in letters and great sanity of mind was a great pleasure to read. It did not cheer me up because I was not cast down, but it has made me happy. Of Mr. Percy Spalding I know only the name, but I appreciate immensely this testimony volunteered by an impartial mind and a cultivated intelligence. Since you have sent me the letters with the permission of the writers I feel I ought to drop them a line each, which I intend to do on Monday. I don't do it at once because I have undertaken to write a 1,000 word article for the *Man. Guardian,* at the request of James Bone, who is the brother of the "Brassbounder." I have about 400 words more to do and I want to do them to-day because Tittle (the American official portraitist of the Washington Conference) [1] is coming to-morrow for the day, together with Allan Wade and his missus. I have known A. W. for six or seven years now. Talking to me on that memorable Friday he expressed his conviction that every line of that play was "eminently actable." That was absolutely all he said that evening, during his visit, and that really comforted me very much because it was exactly what I tried to make them.

I assure you, my dear, I would have come up to see the play at least once. The cough alone prevented me. You have seen yourself what it is like; I simply hadn't the pluck to travel with it and go to the theatre with it. I feel better this morning, but that may not mean much.

You may take it as a fixed general rule that whatever you do, and especially in respect of the play and the cinema rights in it, will be

[1] He made an etching of Conrad.

approved by me. B.[1] and Co. really deserve that something should be done for them in that way. This as you say yourself is not a case for us to stand on the letter of the agreement. I have answered Benrimo's last letter (as I told you I would) with renewed messages of thanks to my interpreters. I daresay you are right about the rehearsals. But this short study system has sprung up only lately, since the rent of theatres has gone up in an extravagant manner.

The cinema gleam [2] is the lining to the cloud. I trust you will make hay when the sun comes out.

To Arnold Bennett

Oswalds.
Nov. 11th, 1922.

MY DEAR ARNOLD BENNETT,

Your letter to Eric [3] which he sent on here did not comfort me, for indeed I was not cast down; but coming from such a master (amongst other things) of the absolute "truth of presentation" it has made me happy and—I hope not unduly—proud.

As to the words you have written, well, my dear Bennett, one can't very well thank a man for his native generosity (and yours shines in every page you have written in all these years); one can only be deeply moved by it and thank one's stars for having been led in its way. As I write it strikes me that I have lost count by now of all the occasions you have given me to thank my stars.

Two years ago, after finishing the play,[4] I felt I had written "actable" lines. More I did not know. You put your finger on the spot in your remarks on the third scene of the Second Act. It was re-written three times. I could not argue myself out of the notion that I must let in some outer air into the close atmosphere of the Verloc household; and, also, that unless I showed Mr. Vladimir in his *milieu* he would remain too incredible. That notion was honest and perhaps artistic but it was not apparently *du bon théâtre,* or was not done in the way it should have been done.

As to the last Act, the defect you point out is the outcome of the weakness of my character. I did not like to lose anything capable of visual presentation in my desire to squeeze every ounce of tragedy out of the story of Winnie Verloc. I also reckoned on the assistance of mere

[1] Benrimo.
[2] This refers to the sale of cinema rights.
[3] Eric Pinker. It refers to "The Secret Agent."
[4] March 15, 1920.

curiosity—for after Mr. V. is stabbed nobody can tell what will happen next. I simply lost for the moment whatever I may have had of the "stage-sense" in me.

Your letter has untied my tongue, and it is a great relief to be telling these things to you—who think this an honest and not altogether inept piece of work—of which I never have spoken freely with anybody.

Always, with the most affectionate regard.

To Mr. and Mrs. John Galsworthy

Tuesday, Nov. 1922.
Oswalds.

DEAREST ADA AND JACK,

After leaving the theatre at 1.20 A. M. on Thurs: (after the rehearsal) I have not been near the place, and I don't know why the telegrams and letters of the day were not sent to me till last night's post. They might have been given to Jessie, who with a large, agreeable grin assured me that she had *the* evening of her life. So, at any rate, one person enjoyed it.[1]

Thanks for your wire of good wishes. I was certain of them. Now it is all over, my state may be described as that of serene joy, only marred by remorse at the injustice of my past thoughts towards the actors who had a lot of characters, certainly not of a "stock" kind, thrown at their heads just 20 days before the first performance. Now like a man touched by grace, I think of them with actual tenderness and almost with affection.

On Friday afternoon I made large cuts, pages, and ½ pages besides phrases here and there (the strangest thing is that I urged these very cuts to be made only to meet with loud protests! The mentality of theatre people is very curious): and last night I wrote my last letter to Benrimo with a message to the interpreter,—which I hope they will believe.

The disagreeable part of this business is to see wasted the hard work of people who depend on it for their livelihood,—and for whom success would mean assured employment and ease of mind. One feels guilty somehow. On Sat: Jessie went again (she loves the theatre) to see the effect of the cuts. Her report was that it all went better. It's of no importance now. Edward wrote to her. He is very pleased. I had a letter from H. A. Jones of the friendliest kind. Years ago when lunching with H. James at the Reform Club I was introduced to him.

[1] The performance of "The Secret Agent," which took place in London on the 3d of November, 1922.

Now my tongue is untied I could write pages to you but I think I had better make "a cut" here. Why should you be bored twice with that?

To Elbridge L. Adams

Oswalds.
Nov. 20th, 1922.

MY DEAR ADAMS,

It was very pleasant to receive your good letter with its good news about yourselves and the Flower of your house. My love to her and her charming mother.

I am extremely pleased to know that you have made the acquaintance of Hugh Walpole and that you are displaying towards him your characteristic kindness. His novel, *The Cathedral,* has been received here with universal applause, as the phrase goes. As a matter of fact I have been very pleased and impressed by the appreciation of this, as they all say here, his biggest effort. I feel rather guilty at not having written yet to him about the book, but he knows me well and we understand each other thoroughly, so I am not afraid of him being angry with me. Pray give him our love when you see him next. He will probably get a letter from me by the next mail.

I have had a letter from Mr. Lee Keedick on the subject of the lectures of which you speak. I have directed Eric Pinker to write to him that it is impossible, for the moment, at any rate. And I don't know that, on consideration, it is a thing to be ever done. In your friendly anxiety, my dear Adams, you forget the deplorable state of my voice, which has been affected by a severe attack of gout in the throat some years ago. Then, apart from the danger of being faced by "extinction" in the middle of a lecture, I will tell you frankly that I am not very anxious to display my accent before a large gathering of people. It might affect them disagreeably, to my disadvantage. And no man ought to be condemned for shrinking from that kind of risk. I will disclose to you that this really is the sorrow of my life; for if it were not for that shrinking I would love nothing better than to give readings from my works, for I know I can read expressively and dramatically and with good effect if it were not for those obstacles to any sort of public appearance. It costs me something to meet the suggestion of such a warm friend as you are by a negative, and I want you to believe that it is not unreasonable shyness or mere obstinacy, but something in the nature of very reasonable caution that causes me to assume that attitude. I don't mention laziness because that was never my failing, and in this particular instance would have had no chance because, God knows, I want the money. And it is

not greed either. You must remember, my dear Adams, that success came to me in the material sense only in 1913, after eighteen years of steady writing. I at once devoted myself to paying off old debts and meeting old obligations. This was of course the first duty. Then came the war, checking the normal development of that material prosperity to a great extent and bringing no end of calls upon my earnings, calls the strength of which one could not resist and indeed never thought of resisting. And now the years are creeping on me with absolutely nothing laid by. So the position is serious enough to make me turn to any prospect of making a little money in an honest and dignified manner—as long as my faculties last. For my faculties are the only capital I have.

I am telling you all these things because I believe in the absolute warmth of the friendship you have for me, which I appreciate immensely and return with an affection and regard not to be measured by the few occasions on which we have met. You are very much in my thoughts always, and I care for your good opinion. I don't want to appear before your eyes as careless or negligent of my opportunities, assuming a pose of disdain or superiority. Neither would I like you to think me unduly timid. But I put it to you that no man can be blamed much by weighing the chances of failure against a possible advantage. I have had an experience of it lately in the non-success of my play which was put on at the Ambassadors Theatre and was withdrawn at the end of a week. It was very disagreeable; though I am neither vexed nor cast down by it, because I am perfectly certain that it had qualities enough to make it not an unworthy performance, and that it deserved a better reception, which, under different circumstances, it might have had. However, this is all over now; and even the disagreeable impression did not last more than a few days.

The idea of your writing an article, of a more intimate character than anything that has been written before on me in America, pleases me vastly;[1] for I do really believe that you understand me better than anybody from your side that I ever met. Under all our outward and obvious differences, such as origins, life history, experiences and activities, there exist, I believe, deep similitudes of character and temperament in us two which make me look forward with confidence to anything you may judge proper to write about me. If that thing is to be done (and I don't say it ought not to be), I would much sooner you did it than any man I can call to mind now. Your characteristically considerate offer to send me the paper to look at before publication is not one that can be declined. But as I have said, my dear Adams, I have a perfect

[1] Refers to a proposal that Elbridge L. Adams should write an article for *The Outlook*, as suggested by the editor of that periodical, describing his personality and conversation in a familiar, intimate way.

confidence in your judgment, in your tact and your sympathy; so, pray, don't do it unless it can be done without putting you or the editor to any inconvenience as to the date or other arrangements connected with the publication. Of course you will see to it that the number of the *Outlook* is mailed to me by the very first packet that sails.

We have just emerged here from the very moderate and indeed remarkably mild turmoil of the General Election. The Labour party has attained by its numbers to the dignity of being the official Opposition, which, of course, is a very significant fact and not a little interesting. I don't know that the advent of class-parties into politics is abstractly good in itself. Class for me is by definition a hateful thing. The only class really worth consideration is the class of honest and able men to whatever sphere of human activity they may belong—that is, the class of workers throughout the nation. There may be idle men; but such a thing as an idle class is not thinkable; it does not and cannot exist. But if class-parties are to come into being (the very idea seems absurd), well then, I am glad that this one had a considerable success at the elections. It will give Englishmen who call themselves by that name (and amongst whom there is no lack of intelligence, ability and honesty) that experience of the rudiments of statesmanship which will enable them to use their undeniable gifts to the best practical effect. For the same reason I am glad that they have not got the majority. Generally I think that the composition of the House is good. The outstanding personalities are not so promising. The majority of them—to be frank about it—are somewhat worn out; therefore one looks forward with great interest to those unknown men yet, who, before long, are bound to emerge.

My wife joins me in warmest wishes for the prosperity of you all, big and little.

To Christopher Sandeman

Oswalds.
21 Nov., '22.

TRÈS CHER AMI,

Your letter reached me this morning, bringing warmth and light to my spirits gloomied by the November sky and chilled by the November temperature of this Blessed Isle. As to the story of this household, it is soon told: *"Nous avons vécu."* This saying of a Frenchman (Abbé Sieyès, I think) may be supplemented and coloured by the saying of an American (name unknown): "Life is just one damned thing after another."

The longer I live the more I feel that the above *est une très belle généralisation*. Children and savages are alone capable sometimes of such illuminative sayings.

Talking of children, I may just as well tell you here that one of mine is now with the Daimler Co. on the administrative-trading side; and the other (John) is still at Tonbridge School, trying to crawl out of the classic side on to the modern (for which he hankers, having certainly a "technical" mind). From them by an easy transition I come to their mother, who was the first to spot your handwriting in the pile of letters and begs to be remembered to you with her kindest regards. She has regained her walking powers almost completely—though of course she cannot expect to ever be as active as the "undamaged" of this world.

I of course have arrived at the time of life when one lets the years come and go without caring much. My latest accomplishment is incipient asthma, which I fancy will develop into something remarkable before long. At present it is almost negligible. Last July between the gasps, coughs and groans I managed to finish a comparatively short novel—which certainly is not remarkable.[1] It will be published next spring. I am at work at another—because I must. But that is nothing new. Several "damned things" of a rather pronounced type happened to me during the last 12 months, and I duly cursed them. But when the "series" stops—where will I be? Not that I care; it's only the stupidity of the whole thing that irritates me.

Oh! yes! my dear Sandeman. The theatrical world! I felt more than ever how much *la vida es sueño* and what *fantoches* we become the moment we step on to the stage. I was there like a man in a dream of a particularly squalid kind, my very lines sounding hollow and utterly contemptible. And yet I may say to you without false modesty that the play is certainly not contemptible. I felt disconcerted at every step—and yet amused. And that faculty of detachment saved me from dying of rage on several occasions. However, I went only three times to the theatre.[2] Jessie went to the première and confessed that she had the evening of her life, never having spoken to so many people she didn't know, before.

La chute a été retentissante. Reading the press-cuttings was like being in a parrot-house. Of course a failure is always disagreeable, but that impression wore off at the end of 3 days. The play will be put on in Warsaw about the 23rd March. I had letters from them expressing surprise, mostly at the old-fashioned notions of the London critics.

[1] *The Rover*.

[2] Joseph Conrad went only to three rehearsals, but never went to see the play as acted before the public.

Thanks, my dear Sandeman, for your most friendly invitation. I do not think I can get away this winter—or else nothing would give me greater pleasure than to accept your hospitality offered with such charming *camaraderie* in the Palazzo. I am one of those that can work only in their workshop. And this novel *must* be finished by April.

I've lately read nothing but Marcel Proust. But I share your opinion of the historians who have treated of the Second Empire. What an astonishing atmosphere that time had!

Never doubt of our affectionate remembrance.

To Bruno Winaver

Oswalds.
Nov. 23rd, 1922.

MY DEAR SIR,

Thank you very much for your letter received three days ago and for the newspaper page which came by to-day's post.

Any failure is disagreeable, but in this case I was not unduly affected and I do not think of it now except as a curious and, to me, novel experience.[1] I will also tell you that I anticipated what has happened for reasons which were not exclusively connected with the defects and the difficulties of the play itself. The reading of press-cuttings gave me the impression as of being in a parrot-house. Same tones, same words, same noises. Personally I was treated with great consideration; it is a pity that a little more consideration has not been given to the play. If it had been a criminal act it could not have been more severely condemned. There were, however, a few notable exceptions from the first, and afterwards a certain controversy arose upon the manner in which dramatic critics should exercise their function.

All this is over now. As to the production, I will not enter here upon the subject, except from a practical point of view. The play was presented in Three Acts, the Drawing-room Act becoming the Third Scene of Act Second, and the Fourth Act being then called the Third. That certainly gave a better balance to the composition. I made severe cuts (after the first night) in Scene I (with the Professor), and Scene II (Insp. Heat), and, as to that last, I was very glad to do it, because these two parts were so badly cast that the less those people had to do and say the better, I thought, it would be for the play as a whole. As a matter of fact I wanted to do those cuts during the rehearsals but was not allowed then to have my way. But, upon the whole, I should like

[1] The performance of "The Secret Agent."

you to understand that I have practically nothing to do with the production. I did not go to the première or any others of the ten performances.

I have no remarks or suggestions to offer as to the production in Warsaw. All that will have to come from you; and I am perfectly certain that you will do everything that can be done to make the play acceptable on the stage. But an appeal to a public is like an appeal to the Olympian gods—whose tempers were uncertain and tastes capricious.

I was very much interested in the theatrical announcements and the programme of the Polish Theatre. Your little article on queues as a social function, on the mobility of tastes, on the education of the *nouveau riche,* and other public matters, made delightful reading.

To George T. Keating

Oswalds.
December 14th, 1922.

MY DEAR MR. KEATING,

Our warmest and most sincere wishes for health, success, and all that's good for you both and all yours for this festive season and all the years to come. And may they be many!

Thank you for your friendly and interesting letter. How good of you to give me so much of your time and so much of your thought. Your appreciation and your interest in my work are very precious to me. I wish I were a better letter writer, both as to quantity and quality, and then perhaps I could convince you of my gratitude. But when it comes to truth of that sort words fail me as a rule. It's the concoction of artistic lies that is my strong point, as twenty-four volumes of pure fiction testify. However, as you and a few other men I care for seem to like them I will try to continue for a little while longer on my reprehensible course.

Mencken's vigour is astonishing. It is like an electric current. In all he writes there is a crackle of blue sparks like those one sees in a dynamo house amongst revolving masses of metal that give you a sense of enormous hidden power. For that is what he has. Dynamic power. When he takes up a man he snatches him away and fashions him into something that (in my case) he is pleased with—luckily for me, because had I not pleased him he would have torn me limb from limb. Whereas as it is he exalts me almost above the stars. It makes me giddy. But who could quarrel with such generosity, such vibrating sympathy and with a mind so intensely alive? What, however, surprises me is that

a personality so genuine in its sensations, so independent in judgment, should now and then condescend to mere parrot talk; for his harping on my Slavonism is only that. I wonder what meaning he attaches to the word? Does he mean by it primitive natures fashioned by a Byzantine theological conception of life, with an inclination to perverted mysticism? Then it cannot possibly apply to me. Racially I belong to a group which has historically a political past, with a Western Roman culture derived at first from Italy and then from France; and a rather Southern temperament; an outpost of Westernism with a Roman tradition, situated between Slavo-Tartar Byzantine barbarism on one side and the German tribes on the other; resisting both influences desperately and still remaining true to itself to this very day. I went out into the world before I was seventeen, to France and England, and in neither country did I feel myself a stranger for a moment: neither as regards ideas, sentiments, nor institutions. If he means that I have been influenced by so-called Slavonic literature then he is utterly wrong. I suppose he means Russian; but as a matter of fact I never knew Russian. The few novels I have read I have read in translation. Their mentality and their emotionalism have been always repugnant to me, hereditarily and individually. Apart from Polish my youth has been fed on French and English literature. While I was a boy in a great public school we were steeped in classicism to the lips, and, though our historical studies were naturally tinted with Germanism. I know that all we boys, the six hundred of us, resisted that influence with all our might, while accepting the results of German research and thoroughness. And that was only natural. I am a child, not of a savage but of a chivalrous tradition, and if my mind took a tinge from anything it was from French romanticism perhaps. It was fed on ideas, not of revolt but of liberalism of a perfectly disinterested kind, and on severe moral lessons of national misfortune. Of course I broke away early. Excess of individualism perhaps? But that, and other things, I have settled a long time ago with my conscience. I admit I was never an average, able boy. As a matter of fact, I was not able at all. In whatever I have achieved afterwards I have simply followed my instinct: the voice from inside. Mencken might have given me the credit of being just an individual somewhat out of the common, instead of ramming me into a category, which proceeding, anyhow, is an exploded superstition.

This outburst is provoked, of course, by dear Mencken's amazing article about me, so many-sided, so brilliant and so warm-hearted. For that man of a really ruthless mind, pitiless to all shams and common formulas, has a great generosity. My debt of gratitude to him has been growing for years, and I am glad I have lived long enough to read the latest contribution. It's enough to scare anyone into the most self-

searching mood. It is difficult to believe that one has deserved all that. So that is how I appear to Mencken! Well, so be it.

What more could anyone expect!

I was very interested in your account of dear Hugh's[1] activities on the lecturing platform. I am delighted to hear you like him—that all America likes him. Here his latest book has a great success of a serious, worth-having kind. Our household misses him immensely, but I most of all. F. N. Doubleday has just left for America. He is, as you know, my excellent publisher, but what's more he is a good friend to have.

Certainly I have a great opinion of Maupassant. I formed a guess from something in your letter that you are sending me a splendidly bound book. I have, I believe, begged you before not to do anything of the kind again. I am a considerably older man than you, and you ought to treat my wishes with deference. But much you care! I suppose I will have to forgive you once more.

I am glad you liked the pamphlets. But you must understand that this is no present. You have a right to them and to a copy of any others that I may yet publish at some future time. That's how I look at it. A moral right, a friend's right.

My affectionate regards to Mrs. Keating and love to the children.

To C. K. Scott Moncrieff

Oswalds.
Dec. 17th., 1922.

MY DEAR MONCRIEFF,

I forgive you your "horrible" letter. (You will notice how characteristic of Conrad is this proceeding of answering letters by the end. That is the fault the critics found with my novels. They called it "indirect method." Funny lot, the critics.)

I am brilliant this morning. Some day I will begin a novel like this —with a word in quotes and then a long parenthesis.

The lack of response from the public does not surprise me. And I don't think it surprises very much Messrs. Chatto & Windus. The more honour to them in risking that shot for which no great prize can be obtained. As to you, it is clear that you have done this for love—and there is no more to be said.

In the volumes you sent me I was much more interested and fascinated by your rendering than by Proust's creation. One has revealed to me something and there is no revelation in the other. I am speaking now

[1] Hugh Walpole.

of the sheer *maîtrise de langue;* I mean how far it can be pushed—in your case of two languages—by a supreme faculty akin to genius. For to think that such a result could be obtained by mere study and industry would be too depressing. And that is the revelation. As far as the *maîtrise de langue* is concerned there is no revelation in Proust.

Of course this is for you. It isn't a statement for a propaganda booklet.

Now as to Marcel Proust, *créateur,* I don't think he has been written about much in English, and what I have seen of it was rather superficial. I have seen him praised for his "wonderful" pictures of Paris life and provincial life. But that has been done admirably before, for us, either in love, or in hatred, or in mere irony. One critic goes so far as to say that P.'s great art reaches the universal and that in depicting his own past he reproduces for us the general experience of mankind. But I doubt it. I admire him rather for disclosing a past like nobody else's, for enlarging, as it were, the general experience of mankind by bringing to it something that has not been recorded before. However, all that is not of much importance. The important thing is that whereas before we had analysis allied to creative art, great in poetic conception, in observation, or in style, his is a creative art absolutely based on analysis. It is really more than that. He is a writer who has pushed analysis to the point when it became creative. All that crowd of personages in their infinite variety through all the gradations of the social scale are made to stand up, to live, and are rendered visible to us by the force of analysis alone. I don't say P. has got no gift of description or characterization; but to take an example from each end of the scale: Françoise, the devoted servant, and le baron de Charlus—a consummate portrait—how many descriptive lines have they got to themselves in the whole body of that immense work? Perhaps, counting the lines, half a page each. And yet no intelligent person can doubt for a moment their plastic and coloured existence. One would think that method (and P. has no other, because his method is the expression of his temperament) may be pushed too far, but as a matter of fact it is never wearisome. There may be here and there among those thousands of pages a paragraph that one might think over subtle, a bit of analysis pushed so far as to vanish into nothingness. But those are very few, and all minor, instances. The intense interest never flags because one has got the feeling that the last word is being said upon a subject much studied, much written about and of undying interest—the last word of its time. Those that have found beauty in Proust's work are perfectly right. It is there. What amazes one is its inexplicable character. In that prose so full of life there is no reverie, no emotion, no marked irony, no warmth of conviction, not even a marked rhythm to charm

our fancy. It appeals to our sense of wonder and gains our assent by its veiled greatness. I don't think there ever has been in the whole of literature such an example of the power of analysis and I feel pretty safe in saying that there will never be another.

This is more or less what I think, or imagine that I think. It is really not half of what I imagine I think. If it is any good to you, you may alter, cut down, expand, twist, turn over and do anything you like with the above lines to make them suitable. It's indubitable that you know much more about Proust than I do, so please strike out (as a friendly service to me) whatever may appear to you absurd in this thing without a name. I mean it!

I hope your health is improving. Are you still on the *Times* then? Is it a great tie? Could you find a day to run down here—for the night if possible? Soon, I mean. My wife sends her kind regards. Always, my dear Moncrieff, cordially yours.[1]

To C. K. Scott Moncrieff

Oswalds.
Dec. 29th, 1922.

MY DEAR SCOTT MONCRIEFF,

We shall be glad to see you either on the 8th or 9th, but I must warn you that John—the boy you have seen when you were here last with Lord Northcliffe—has developed mumps, which is, I believe, an infectious disease. However, I will be able to keep him out of your way if you come for the day.

You give me a job there to think of a title for the flowering young women of poor Proust. It will take some thinking out and I am afraid the solution will be in abandoning it altogether. However, we might talk about it when we meet.[2]

[1] Marcel Proust had died on November 18th of this year. A "tribute" by some fifty French writers was hastily prepared and published in the following January as a special number of the *Nouvelle Revue Française*. Proust's English translator conceived the idea of a similar, though smaller, collection of English appreciations, but made his plan conditional on the participation of J. C. and Professor Saintsbury. In appealing to J. C., he had apologized for "this horrible letter." That volume of appreciations in English was published and in it a part of the above letter.

[2] C. K. S. M. was going for a few days to Canterbury to finish his translation of the first volume of Proust's *A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*. When writing to accept an invitation to Oswalds he had asked J. C. to suggest an English equivalent for this title. Later, J. C. produced a sheet of paper which bears, in

I am sorry to see from your letter that your health is obviously far from good. We hoped that there was a marked improvement. Please drop us a line fixing the day and the train by which you will come, if you do decide to take the risk. Of course the car will meet you in Canterbury. Warm regards.

To Elbridge L. Adams

Oswalds.
Jan. 22nd, 1923.

MY DEAR ADAMS,

Your registered article arrived this morning and I put everything aside to welcome it with all the regard and care due to this proof of your solid friendship for us.[1]

I have just read it carefully once and am writing this to (first of all) give you my warm thanks for the pervading sympathy of this sketch of our personal relations. The man who would not be satisfied with it would have to be a very cantankerous, conceited, crooked-minded and objectionable brute. Seriously, my dear Adams, I am touched by the genuineness of sentiment which informs this survey of our intercourse. I am not alluding here to facts, which are correct but which might have been expressed accurately in many other forms of words, but to that something intangible, proceeding from the spirit, which makes your form specially welcome to me.

I have not yet touched the text so I cannot allude here precisely to certain corrections which I am going to make. Some of them will bear mainly on the minor details of matters of fact; just a few words changed. One will deal with a whole paragraph. It is very short and relates to the remarks I made to you about Wells, Belloc and Chesterton. I think it could very well come out, as it is a very general statement, dealing mainly with Wells from a critical point of view, and certainly not expressing all my view of Wells, which in many respects is quite appreciative. There is also the passage dealing more or less with my material position, which I should like to tone down, as what one says to a friend for whom one has a particular regard need not be repeated quite so openly to the world at large. You may think that I am too

his handwriting, the suggested titles *In the Shade of Blossoming Youth* and *In the Shade of Young Girls in Bloom*. Ultimately, another title was chosen, but the book did not appear in English until after Conrad's death.

[1] This refers to the article written by Elbridge L. Adams for *The Outlook* (U. S. A.).

particular in that respect. It is, no doubt, a weakness of mine to cling to my prejudices in favour of privacy. If, in a sense, it may be a weakness, it is a harmless one.

. . . Morley's article is perfectly charming and I cannot but be grateful to him for striking the right note.[1] What is most vexing is to think that after all the thing may not come off, as you know my health is very uncertain, and the months of March and April are a critical time for me in that respect. So the least said about it the better.

I am hard at work at a novel and am feeling fairly well, but the uncertainty of which I have spoken prevents me indulging in hopes. Even my "good" health is a very poor and precarious thing. What frightens me most is the fact that people on your side won't be able to understand how the commonest social exertion may on any given day be too much for me, and take my shrinking for ungraciousness, or laziness, or lack of appreciation, or any other repulsive trait of character.

I have just finished annotating and modifying—as you have permitted me to do. You may think I have been too meticulous in the alterations suggested. My view is that this first personal sketch by a friend of mine will become an authority. People will refer to it in the future. This accounts for my care to get the shades of my meaning established in your recollections, which are wonderfully accurate in the main. As to alterations on pp. 20 & 21, I tried to tone down all references to my age. Must give no opportunity to seize on what may have been a pessimistic moment in our talk. The world is very stupid and one must be careful. I must finish here to catch the mail. With our united love to you both and the chicks.

P. S. Thanks for the press-cuttings. The accident on board that ship was an extraordinary one.[2] I have had a 50-foot spar on deck getting adrift in a gale and it was terrifying enough to tackle it in the dark.

To F. N. Doubleday

Oswalds.
Feb. 5th, 1923.

DEAR MR. DOUBLEDAY,

Your letters of the 18th and 25th, together with the excellent photograph in which I recognized the features of my old and valued friend

[1] Christopher Morley's article printed in the New York *Evening Post,* on J. C.'s coming visit to the United States.

[2] This refers to Conrad's *Dalgonar* letter in the London *Mercury.* See *Last Essays,* p. 81.

Sheik Abu-Kitab (Father of the Books), arrived this evening to gladden my heart and delightfully interrupt my toil over the TS. pages of the novel.

I am extremely gratified to hear that it has interested and pleased you, as far as it goes, in the part in your possession, for later on the interest increases with the development of the dramatic situation. I send you my warmest thanks for the labour and time you have expended over the *Rover* tangle. This is a Rescue indeed. *Your* Rescue: and I hope that unlike Lingard's it won't turn to dust and ashes and end in disillusion. And, quoting the words of Mrs. Travers, all I can say is that you are "the most generous of men." On the other hand, unlike Mrs. Travers, I am sure you will not turn your back on me after accomplishing the noble feat. I haven't heard yet from Eric, so that your news had all the force of the unexpected relief from suspense.

I say no more here because I want to dispatch this by to-night's mail to be sure it will catch the Wednesday packet.

Your other author, Mrs. C.,[1] joins me in sincerest regards.

To Ernst Bendz

Oswalds.
7th March, 1923.

DEAR DR. BENDZ,

Thank you very much for the copy of the pamphlet on myself and my work. I need not tell you that I have perused it with great attention and no small appreciation.[2]

I have the more reason to be grateful to you for this remarkable, and in so many ways generous, recognition of my work because I have heard, from a friend who visited Sweden last year, that I am regarded in that country as literarily a sort of Jack London. I don't mean to depreciate in the least the talent of the late Jack London, who wrote to me in a most friendly way many years ago at the very beginning, I think, of his literary career, and with whom I used to exchange messages through friends afterwards; but the fact remains that temperamentally, mentally, and as a prose writer, I am a different person. I sympathized much with the warm and direct talent of Jack London, and was sorry to hear of his death—but, after all, one doesn't like to be taken for what one is not. For one thing, for instance, I am much

[1] Mrs. Conrad. This refers to Mrs. Conrad's book, *A Handbook of Cookery for a Small House,* published in the United States by Doubleday, Page & Co.

[2] *Joseph Conrad,* by Ernst Bendz. A pamphlet in English published by the Swedish professor Bendz in Göteborg.

less of a good humanitarian than Jack London; but I think that I am not taking too much on myself in saying that I am a good European, not exactly in the superficial, cosmopolitan sense, but in the blood and bones as it were, and as the result of a long heredity.

Apart from the natural gratification one finds in meeting with such admirably expressed sympathy, I followed your analysis with no little curiosity. It is interesting to learn about one's self from a judge for whose attainments one cannot but have a sincere respect. I will confess to you frankly that I do not know much about my own work. I cannot defend myself from the suspicion that you make perhaps too much of its merits, while I see with profound satisfaction that you never question its absolute sincerity, both in its qualities and in its defects.

I will take the liberty to point out that *Nostromo* has never been intended for the hero of the Tale of the Seaboard. Silver is the pivot of the moral and material events, affecting the lives of everybody in the tale. That this was my deliberate purpose there can be no doubt. I struck the first note of my intention in the unusual form which I gave to the title of the First Part, by calling it "The Silver of the Mine," and by telling the story of the enchanted treasure on Azuera, which, strictly speaking, has nothing to do with the rest of the novel. The word "silver" occurs almost at the very beginning of the story proper, and I took care to introduce it in the very last paragraph, which would perhaps have been better without the phrase which contains that key-word. Some of my critics have perceived my intention; the last of them being Miss Ruth Stauffer in her little study of my Romantic-Realism, published in Boston in 1922.

I am only too acutely aware of my lapses of style, but, in one or two instances which you give, the construction of the speech is shaped on purpose to characterize the person; as for instance when Therese speaks, all through *The Arrow of Gold*.

It is very obvious that I don't possess the English language in any exceptional way; but that is no reason to doubt my sincerity when I say that it has possessed and even shaped my thoughts. Idiomatically I am never at fault, and it is absolutely true that if I had not written in English I would not have written at all.

To F. N. Doubleday

Oswalds.
March 13th, 1923.

MY DEAR MR. DOUBLEDAY,

Thanks for your good letter of Feb. 25th. A few days before it reached me I had heard from Mr. Everitt and I knew you had gone

in search of warmth and sunshine at the Bahamas. I saw them for the first and last time in 1875 when beating through the Florida Channel in the ship *Mont-Blanc* on the first voyage of my sea-life. At that time Nassau was not a winter resort and stagnation and poverty lay over the whole group, which seemed very much out of the world.

I will now proceed to report to you on the situation.

I have finished Part Three of the novel,[1] having been able to slow down the pace after the success of your intervention in the matter of *The Rover*. I was glad to do that because I was feeling strained by working against time; and I am persuaded that it wouldn't have been worth while to keep it up when the necessity for it was gone. Of course the novel will be finished, say, by September or October of this year and, as I suppose you will agree with me that *The Rover* must be given a year's run in book-form, there would be time to serialize *Suspense* and issue it as a book in the autumn of '24.

A gentleman called Beer has asked me to write an introduction to a life of Stephen Crane,[2] which I think he is going to publish some time this year. I decided to do it for him and have begun this very day. It makes a change and upon the whole I am glad of being able to talk a little to the world at large about Crane, whose particular gifts I admired and for whom both my wife and myself had a great affection. Directly that is finished, say, in five or six days, I shall return to the novel and do as much as I can up to about a week before sailing.

In regard to various circumstances of the domestic order I have concluded to start from Glasgow on Ap. 21st. by the *Tuscania,* which David Bone is commanding now. It will make a great difference to me, to cross over with a friend. The *Tuscania* will be returning on June 7th, which would give me a clear month (of May) in the United States.

It seems an awfully long time to inflict myself on the kindness of Mrs. Doubleday and yourself. I hope you will not regret your friendly impulse to make me free of your home for such a long time. Your optimistic view of the prospects of this visit cheers me up immensely. I assure you I do not look on my visit as a dollar-raiding expedition. And indeed if I never made any I would not feel disappointed.

It has occurred to me, dear Mr. Doubleday, that I ought to tell you of the offers I had by the Universities of Oxford, Edinburgh, Liverpool and Durham, of an honorary degree, which I have declined. This is between ourselves. I only would like to point out that this would debar me from accepting a similar offer from any other quarter. Re-

[1] *Suspense.*

[2] A few weeks later Joseph Conrad wrote the Introduction to Mr. Thomas Beer's *Life of Stephen Crane.*

fusing such an honour is the most disagreeable thing in the world, but I am perfectly determined to have nothing to do with any academic distinction.

I hope to hear from you once more before I leave England. I am sending this letter to Garden City, assuming that you will be returning soon there. Pray give my duty to Mrs. Doubleday.

To Eric Pinker

Oswalds.
March 15th, 1923.

DEAREST ERIC,

I have received this morning a letter from Ibañez,[1] in the most extraordinary jargon of French I have ever read in my life. The gist of it is that a letter to you has been written care of Grant Richards; since, apparently, that is the only address in the whole city of London that Ibañez knows. I imagine you would either get it to-day or that you have had it already. By the time we meet I will have mastered the Ibañez language sufficiently to translate it for you.

Unless I hear from you to the contrary I shall raid the office on Monday at the usual hour.

To Stefan Zeromski [2]

Oswalds.
25. 3. '23.

DEAR AND ESTEEMED SIR,

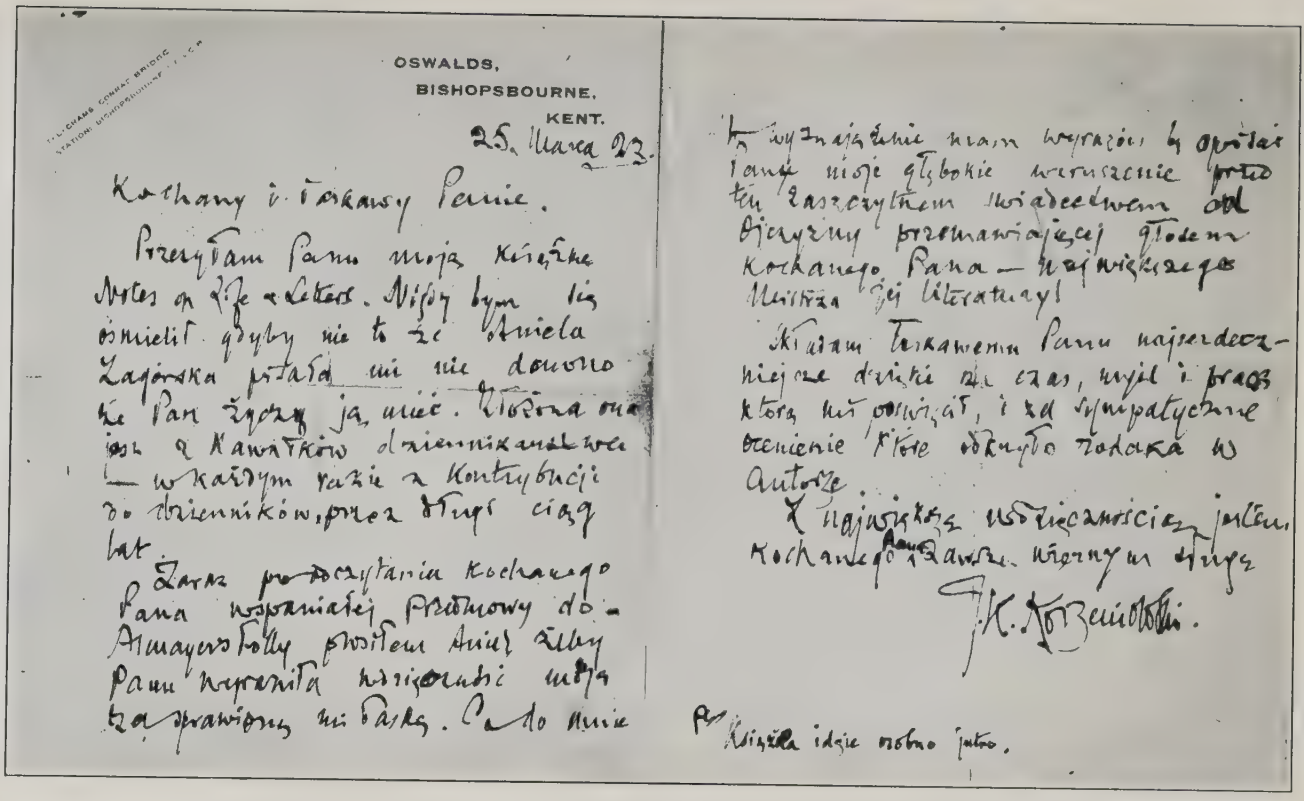
I am sending you my book, *Notes on Life and Letters*. I would never have dared do it, had not Angela Zagórska written to me recently that you wished to have it. This book consists of articles published in newspapers, and chiefly of contributions to newspapers, written during many years.

Directly after having read your magnificent preface to *Almayer's Folly* [3] I asked Angela that she would convey the expression of my grati-

[1] Blasco Ibañez, the Spanish novelist. The letter was dated "Mentone, 1c mars, 1923." J. C. replied in French on the 21st of March. The letter will be included in the volume of French letters of Joseph Conrad which will be published later.

[2] The original of this letter is in Polish.

[3] Stefan Zeromski, the greatest Polish novelist of his generation, died in 1925. He had written an Introduction for the translation into Polish of the Complete Works of Joseph Conrad. Joseph Conrad and Stefan Zeromski had met



OSWALDS,
BISHOPSBOURNE,
KENT.

25. Marca 23.

Kochany i Łaskawy Panie.

Przeczytam Panu moją książkę Notes on Life & Letters. Niby bym się ośmielił gdyby nie to że Ariela Zagórska prosiła mię nie dawno że Pan życzy ją mieć. Wydana ona jest z kawałków dziennikarskich — w każdym razie z kontrybucji do dzienników, przez długi ciąg lat.

Zaraz po przeczytaniu Kochanego Pana wspaniałej przedmowy do Almayera Folly powiem Ariel żeby Panu wypraszała wynagrodzić mękę za sprawiony mi kłopot. Co do mnie

to wyznaję że nie mam wyrazów by opisać całą moję głęboką wdzięczność przed tem zaszczytem świadectwem od Wielkiego przemawiającej głosem Kochanego Pana — największego Mistrza Jej literatury!

Ściskam Łaskawemu Panu najserdeczniej za dzisiaj za czas, wysiłek i pracę którą mi poświęcił, i za sympatyczne przyjęcie które odkrytą rodaka w Autorze.

Z najszczerszą wdzięcznością jestem Kochanego Pana zawsze wiernym sługą

J. K. Korzeniowski.

Książka idzie osobno jutro.

Facsimile of a letter in Polish from Joseph Conrad to Stefan Zeromski.

tude to you for the great favour you had conferred on me. I admit that I cannot find words to describe my deep emotion in reading this appreciation of yours, by which I feel profoundly honoured, appreciation coming from my country, voiced by you, dear Sir, who are the greatest master of its literature.

Please accept, dear and esteemed Sir, my most affectionate thanks for the time, the thought and the work you have devoted to me and for your most sympathetic comprehension which has discovered the compatriot behind the author.

With all my gratitude, believe me, dear Sir, always your very faithful friend and servant.

P. S. The book will be posted to-morrow.

To R. B. Cunninghame Graham

Oswalds.
30 Mch., '23.

EX^me^ DON ROBERTO, MY DEAR FRIEND,

I don't remember such a great pleasure for years as that of your letter in praise of "Gaspar Ruiz" has given me. That story was written about 1905 and published in book form in 1908. I thought you had seen it a long time ago: and to receive such a testimony to its general truth (of impression) *from you* is the most gratifying thing that has happened to me in my career,—of letters. But it is a longish story and you may not be so pleased with *la suite.*

Still, even if no more than those opening pages secure your commendation, it is something to be proud of. I can't however let you read it in French,[1] (in slow instalments) at that, and I am writing to Methuen to send me the vol. (*Set of Six*), which I will inscribe and forward to you. "G.R." is the first story in it.

I found the seed of it in *Capt. Basil Hall, R.N. "Journal of the Years 1820, –21, –22";* a work of which you may have heard. Hall was a friend of Gen. San Martin. The original of Gaspar Ruiz is a man called Benavides, a free lance on the southern frontier of Chile during the wars of the Revolution. Hall gives him a page or two,—mostly hearsay. I had to invent all his story, find the motives for his

once in Zakopane (Galicia, Poland), a little after the outbreak of the war in 1914.

[1] In the French translation of "Gaspar Ruiz" by M. Philippe Neel, which had been published in the April issue of the *Revue de l'Amérique latine,* in Paris.

changes of sides,—and the scenery of the tale. And now the very writing of it seems like the memory of a dream!

I was about to write to you to tell you that I had a letter from Ibañez [1] (which I answered at once) and also from his publishing house. As Pinker is gone to the U. S. and I am going on the 21st, I asked both Ibañez and the publishing house to let us take up the negotiation early in June, when Pinker will be back. I also expect to be back by the 10th of that month. Mine is not a dollar-hunting expedition. I am going to stay with Doubleday at Oyster Bay and see a few people. You'll hear from me in a few days as to my movements. We must meet, if at all possible, before I leave.

To Miss Wedgwood [2]

Oswalds.
31 Mch., '23.

MY DEAR VERONICA,

What a traveller you are,—and, incidentally, what a nice person to write me such an interesting letter! Yes. Ajaccio is all right and Corsica is lovely and I have admired it,—for three months on end: which is a sufficient tribute, I think. I, too, have been oppressed, buried under, smothered and choked by the mimosas thrown into the carriage by a driver,—by many drivers. They will do it. They are all mad,—you know. One of them, once, left his horses and trap (where my wife and I were sitting) within about three inches from the edge of a dreadful precipice in order to climb a mimosa tree. He sat there for (I think) one hour, like a sort of devastating bird, showering broken branches on the ground below. Neither my prayers nor my threats could induce him to come back to his horses. I offered him at last all the money I had in my pocket, my watch and chain, any sum I (a stranger) could borrow in Corsica (which is a poor country). He remained deaf. He did not think the offer good enough, I suppose. The mimosa shook and cracked most pathetically. The horses dozed. The precipice yawned (they always do) and I admired the Corsican scenery but wished myself back in England,—on Romney Marsh for preference. Yes, Corsica is a lovely island, but dangerous,—because of its drivers who are a public terror; and thus worse than the vendettas which are private affairs. Did Cook's people show you a vendetta? I haven't seen one but I saw a bandit. He was quite tame. He took a cigarette from my hand most delicately.

[1] Blasco Ibañez, the Spanish novelist.

[2] The daughter of Sir Ralph Wedgwood, one of Conrad's executors; the recipient was then fourteen years old.

Directly I heard you were taking your Mother to Constantinople I began to think what I should do if the Turks captured you, as they always have done in the 18th Century tales. I would have had to go (of course with your Father's permission) to rescue you from the Infidels. So I formed a plan. An excellent plan—but I cannot tell you of it now. It is not because I am lazy but because I am going to America in three weeks' time and the plan would take several months to describe properly.

Give my love to your Mother and your Father: and please, my dear, keep a little corner in your heart for your old and frivolous friend.

To F. N. Doubleday

Oswalds.
April 2nd, 1923.

MY DEAR MR. DOUBLEDAY,

You would have heard from D[avid]. Bone that my passage is engaged for the 21st. I am looking forward very much to my visit to the country where I have so many good friends of my work.

In consequence of dear C. Morley's article [1] I have had a few letters from various parts of the U. S. of the most kind character, and mainly from private persons. I have had also a letter from the Professor of Sclavonic Literature at the University of Columbia, begging me for a formal visit there. I intend to answer him by next Saturday's mail, saying that knowing nothing about Sclavonic Literature (or, in truth, of any other) I can't consent to do that; but that I would be glad to meet the students of his department in an informal manner. I could do no less, as the Professor is a very distinguished man and a brother-in-law of the President of the Polish Academy of Letters in Cracow. A downright refusal would be heard of over there and probably produce a false impression.

I do not know whether I have told you that I have given an interview to the Philadelphia *Ledger* on a cable request from there. A very nice and sympathetic young man came to see me here and we had a long talk. I don't know what he made of it, because the number containing the interview was not sent to me.

May I ask you, dear Mr. Doubleday, to send a set of my works (in buckram) to Major Gordon Gardiner, 12 Queen Anne's Gate, London, S. W.? He is a great friend of mine and is one of the voluntary Visitors

[1] An article published in the New York *Evening Post* by Christopher Morley.

of H. M.'s Prisons. The set is destined for one of the prisons where short term prisoners (up to two years) are detained.

Eric Pinker will be able to tell you more about me, though I have confided no "important messages" to him. A few days before his departure I was asked to write an introduction for a biography of Stephen Crane, which has been written by Mr. Thomas Beer. I was pleased to pay my little tribute to the memory of my first American friend, for whom I had a great affection. Notwithstanding the difference of our ages Crane and I were very intimate. That introduction is not at all literary but purely personal, giving a sketch of our relations.

I was much cheered up by receiving a set of corrected galleys of *The Rover* from my English publisher. I made a few minor corrections, of which Miss Hallowes has made an abstract. She is sending it by the same mail to Mrs. Robins, with the request they should be applied to the American edition. It has been always my ambition to make the American and English texts identical, word for word; and I think that in this book I will attain it.

Will you please remember me to the Ladies and give my friendly greeting to Mr. Nelson?

Believe me always, with great regard.

To Eric Pinker[1]

Oswalds.
April 9th, 1923.

DEAREST ERIC,

It seems ages since you left and I begin to feel rather anxious to get away. I have prepared a five-minute speech for the Lifeboats[2] and have sketched out the outlines of a lecture, or rather of a familiar talk, on the (apparently) extravagant lines of the imaginative literary art being based fundamentally on scenic motion, like a cinema; with this addition that for certain purposes the artist is a much more subtle and complicated machine than a camera, and with a wider range, if in the visual effects less precise—and so on, and so on, for an hour; with a mixture of jocularity and intense seriousness (which *may* do). I intend to try it on the Garden City people (as Doubleday promised me), with illustrative bits of reading from *Victory*.

I have another one in my head which I may begin here and finish

[1] Eric Pinker was then in New York.

[2] A speech delivered by J. C. at the meeting of the Lifeboat Institution in London, Æolian Hall, April 17, 1923.

on board. Another one will suggest itself in due course, no doubt, and, for all I expect to do, those 3 ought to be enough.

(Don't imagine that I am going to be impertinent to the cinema; on the contrary, I shall butter them up.)

The date-table is as follows: This week at home, with a lunch or two out and guest or two here. Squaring up my correspondence. Packing . . . and generally fussing.

Monday 16th. I shall leave here early via London for Colchester to see my old friend Hope, who is recovering from a stroke. Back in Curzon Hotel at 7.

On the 17th, Mrs. C.[1] arrives at 12 o'cl., and we will have Ralph [2] to lunch. Lifeboat Institution at 3 o'cl. After dinner I must pay a visit to Mme Alvar, where I will meet Ravel, the French composer, who has come over to conduct one of his works at the Queen's Hall. We got rather thick together last time he was here.[3]

On the 18th, various small matters in the morning. At one, your mother and Œnone are coming up to lunch. I did ask your mother which day of three would be most convenient to her for me to go down to say good-bye, but she very kindly offered to come to London so as to see Mrs. C. who, I am sorry to say, is anything but improving. In the afternoon, see Garnett, by appt. and at five o'clock a few people will call in to tea.

The 19th, I lunch with a man called Gardiner to meet a man in the Diplomatic Service, and in the afternoon I will call on Mrs. Dummett and Mrs. Wedgwood, hoping to see Wedgwood himself. That sort of thing is due to one's executor. In the evening it is just possible that Sir Robert will pay his professional call on Jessie.

If not, then he will do so on the 20th—I trust in the morning, because I will leave for Glasgow at 12.30 P. M. in any case. I intend to spend the night in Glasgow before going on board. Dick [Curle] has offered to come with me and see me off.

I am anxious as to how your wife stood the passage and the American "high-time." Of course I won't expect a letter from you, you will be much too busy for private correspondence, but I do hope I shall have a glimpse of you both before you start for home.

My health is at least as good as when you left. The only thing I couldn't stand would be "pace." I must go slow.

Jessie joins me in love to you both.

[1] Mrs. Conrad.

[2] Ralph Pinker.

[3] J. C. had already met Ravel at Mme Alvar's the year before and they met again on April 17, 1923, with Arnold Bennett and a few other people.

To John Galsworthy

Oswalds.
14 Ap., 1923.

MY DEAREST JACK,

Thanks for your good letter. It was a severe disappointment not to see you before I go. I thought of running down to Littlehampton, but Fate steps in there. You will understand when I tell you that I have to give up all next Monday to a journey to Colchester to see poor Hope (you remember him?), who a little time ago had some kind of stroke. His wife has just written to me to say that he can be seen now and that he expects I shall come down. We knew each other ever since 1880! I dread the visit a little as his speech is affected, his son tells me, tho' apparently not his mind.

Jessie will come up to town on Wednesday to see me off, as it were, but mainly to be seen by the good, unwearied Sir Robert. She is again very lame and in pain. I'll be off on Friday morning with no very light heart, though what you say of the news you had from Eric cheers me up a bit. I hope that journey will not turn out a fool's errand. As to sneaking in quietly into the U. S., there is no hope of that. Muirhead Bone is going in the same ship (his brother commands her) and of course James Bone (of the *Man: Guardian*) knows all about it and has been talking. I have had quite a few wires from various papers already. The fat is in the fire. But you need not be uneasy about the safety of American pressmen. I am going to leave my revolver at home. If I have to show them my teeth (artificial), it will only be in an agreeable smile. And as to what may come after, I leave it to Chance and the inspiration of the moment. I, absolutely, cannot think about it now. Our dear love to you both. It would be a hypocritical affectation on my part to ask you to keep me in your mind. I know you will do that. That is one of the certitudes of my life.

To Sir Robert Jones

Hotel Curzon,
Curzon Street,
Mayfair, London, W.
Thursday, 19. 4. '23.

DEAREST AND BEST OF FRIENDS,

I am so sorry not to see you before I sail. You will forgive me; but the fact is I have been hard at it almost to the last moment doing a

special bit of work which is to pay part of the expenses of this trip.

Scribbling has become utterly distasteful to me. As to this voyage, I start on it without enthusiasm, not because I doubt getting a good reception in the U. S. and probably deriving a certain benefit materially from the visit, but simply because I do not feel quite fit for it,—in myself. However, everybody tells me that I look very well,—so it may be imagination on my part.

It is an immense comfort to me to think that you will see Jessie the day after my departure. I think she will miss me,—and I know that I shall feel like a lost sheep without her. I believe there are many people ready to take care of me on the other side, but no number of them could make up for her absence.

Always your grateful and affectionate friend.

To Mrs. Joseph Conrad

Anchor Line
T.S.S. *Tuscania*
22. 4. '23.

MY DEAREST CHICA,

I begin now the letter that will be sent to you as soon as we arrive in New York.

It is 10 o'clock A. M. I have just had breakfast with Capt. Bone and Muirhead. Muirhead's and my cabin communicate and we are great chums. Our cabin steward is an amiable old fraud. He has taken Muirhead in completely,—but I have talked straight to him this morning at 7 A. M. and we are now on terms of a strict understanding as to service and tips.

Yesterday at Moville it was blowing half-a-gale. Your wire and another from Dr. Reid [1] reached me only about 8 P. M. Thank you for yours, my dearest, and you please thank R. for his to me containing the confident hope that this new treatment will do you good. May it be so! my dear poor Jess.

I must confess that I slept well on my first night on board, in a very narrow bunk. My first thought on waking was for you and I was glad you had John with you and the prospect of a friendly visit from the Rustons before you.

Yesterday I sent you a message by wireless and now (Tuesday 10.30 A. M.) I am wondering whether you have had it the same day. Capt. Bone franked it for me,—so this news was really a present from him to you.

[1] Joseph Conrad's doctor and friend in Canterbury.

In the 2nd and 3rd class there are 800 passengers, not including the swarm of children. But in the first class we are only 48 all told (seven kids): so all these rooms,—lounge, drawing room, smoking room, writing room—look absolutely empty. I am writing this in the smoking room where there are only two persons beside myself. A Mr. and Mrs. Bell. Can't get away from Bells, it seems. Last night it rained, and, at about midnight, it came on thick enough for the foghorn to be blown at intervals till 1.30 when it cleared. Water smooth. Wind east. Ship making only 11 knots since 7 o'clock as the starboard engine has been stopped on account of some small trouble. I know that but the passengers don't. I guess we won't be in till Tuesday next.

29 Ap. 9 P. M.

I am afraid, my dearest, that this letter will not be so long as I intended. Two days ago I had the bad luck to hit my little finger (the deformed one). This started a lot of pain which extended to the wrist and made me feel quite seedy. It is much better to-day. On the 27th the temperature dropped from 63° (in the Gulf Stream) to 51°. That sudden change gave me a touch of lumbago, so I have been sitting in my cabin with a hot-water bottle against the small of my back.

30th 10 A. M.

Much better every way this morning. Have just come up from breakfast. Ship was rolling a good deal last night. Expect to see the Nantucket lightship about noon and at about 11 this evening we will anchor at the quarantine station for the night. The custom house people will be on board at 6.30 A. M. and we shall be moored at the jetty by 10 o'clock. I have had a radio from D'day yesterday. He and Eric will meet me with the car and we shall proceed either to Garden City or to Oyster Bay.

In an hour or so I shall go to the Captain's room, drink tea with him and discuss the situation. In the afternoon the packing will have to be done. Several people, Owen Wister, Old Bok, C. Morley have sent me messages of welcome.

I miss you more and more. As a matter of fact, I am on the edge of worrying though I suppose there is no reason for it. It seems ages since I left you in that bedroom in the hotel. When I think of it I have a funny sensation under the breastbone.

And those boys! I hope John has been a comfort to you while at home and has gone back to school with good resolutions. Send him my paternal love. I would write to B.[orys], but there is really nothing to say of actual interest. I wonder how his patent piston turned out. Let

him know you have heard from me and tell him he is very near my heart,—in which your dear image dwells constantly, commanding all my thoughts and all my love.

Your ever devoted husband.

This letter will be sent direct on board the *Aquitania* which will be leaving to-morrow (Tuesday) at noon from the jetty at which we will moor at ten o'clock.

To Mrs. Joseph Conrad

Effendi Hill, Oyster Bay,
Long Island, New York.
4. 5. '23.

MY DEAREST CHICA,

You know from Doubleday's cable of my safe arrival not only in New York but in this very place.

I will not attempt to describe to you my landing, because it is indescribable. To be aimed at by forty cameras held by forty men is a nerve-shattering experience. Even D'day looked exhausted after we had escaped from that mob,—and the other mob of journalists.

Then a Polish deputation,—men and women (some of these quite pretty)—rushed me on the wharf and thrust enormous nosegays into my hands. Eric nobly carried two of them. Mrs. D'day took charge of another. I went along like a man in a dream and took refuge in D's car.

Imagine, my dear, Powell[1] was there too! Mrs. D. asked him to call, and he dined here yesterday and then played Beethoven and Chopin. Between whiles we talked of you. In fact, you have been very much to the fore in everybody's conversation.

To-morrow, Friday, I go to Garden City in the morning. In the evening there is a dinner-party for J. W. Davis (late ambassador to England) and Col. House to meet me. In an hour or so I expect Eric to arrive here for a quiet talk. From what I have seen he seems to be in good form. Certainly our prospects here are excellent on the face of them. My reception by the press was quite remarkable in its friendliness. But I am feeling distinctly homesick. It comes over me strongly as I sit writing these words.

Doubleday insists on sending you a message in every week-end cable they dispatch to Europe. It is very nice of him and I am pleased to think you will hear of me pretty often. As to writing to you long re-

[1] John Powell, the American pianist and composer.

ports of the daily proceedings, it is not to be thought of. It must be left till my return when I'll tell you the whole wondrous tale.

I do long for the sight of your handwriting. Mrs. Doubleday has just knocked at the door of my bedroom (next to the billiard room) to say good-night (she has been out) and asked me to remember her to you. She is really very good and tries to make me feel at home. The house is charming,—large, luxurious; and the garden quite pretty in the American way.

I close this by depositing many kisses on your dear face.

Tenderest love and hugs to the children,—quite as if they were still little. Remember me to all the domestic staff of our faithful retainers.

To Mrs. Joseph Conrad

6. 5. '23.
Effendi Hill.

MY DEAREST CHICA,

Yesterday my heart was made glad by the sight of your handwriting. I felt better at once and by the virtue of your dear letter I was made to feel fit for the great dinner-party. Col. House and Mrs. H., J. W. Davis, the ex-ambassador and Lady,—Judge Harriman and his wife (great railway people) and a few others.

To-day (Sunday) we lunched at the Long Island Club. I have just got back and am going to have an hour's rest before we start for the Davis home for afternoon tea.

Then a quiet evening here.

The *Tuscania* has been taken off the route. In consequence I've asked F. N. D. to engage my passage in one of the smaller Cunard ships for Southampton. I will let you know her name in my next letter. I am timed to arrive (in S.) on the 12th of June.

A Mrs. Safford is leaving for England on the 15th. She will be in Canterbury about the 28th with her little daughter (about 12) and has volunteered to come and see you if you have no objection. She is really a nice woman, so please receive her in your nice way. She wants to tell you all about me: and as she will be one of the guests of Mrs. Curtiss James, where I am to lecture on Thursday next (10th), she will be able to describe the ordeal to you.

There will be practically no lecturing. The press has been magnifi-

cent. Doubleday is delighted and foretells great financial results from this visit. Everybody most amiable. To-morrow some editors (16) from various parts of the U. S. are coming here to have a talk with me. Mrs. Doubleday (who is looking to my comfort admirably) is going to give them some tea. We all expect great results from this meeting.

I am made to feel I am a considerable person.

On Tuesday morning we all go to the flat in N. York. I lunch at the Century Club 1 o'clock. At 3 I go to Mrs. Curtiss James's to see the drawing room and try my voice there in the presence of Mrs. C. J.'s secretary. At 8 dinner at Mrs. Martin's. Quiet party. On Wed. lunch at Col. House's to meet Paderewski. Afterwards I go to the East India House, a sort of Museum, and am to drive about N. Y. streets. Return home to dine and sleep. Go up to town again on Thursday after lunch here. Call on Mrs. Adams in town about 4. Then rest in the flat till 9 P. M. when we all go to Mrs. C. James's, where my audience will be about 50 women and men. Supper at 11. Sleep in the flat and return here on Friday morning for a quiet week-end. There! I cannot tell you any more now.

There is not a moment when you are not in my thoughts. I long to be back. I have heard nothing from B[orys]. My dearest, I do miss you.

Your own.

To Mrs. Joseph Conrad

New York. 11 May, 1923.

DARLING OWN JESS,

Thank you for your letters, which are arriving regularly. The news of the offer to direct the cooking dept. of a magazine has excited me greatly. I don't see why it should come to nothing if you feel like accepting it. I am sure you would do it very well.

I am writing you on this card because there is nothing else in this flat where we slept last night: and if I waited till we get back to Oyster Bay I would miss to-morrow's packet. And besides, dearest girl, I feel at this moment (10.30 A. M.) perfectly flat, effect of reaction after last evening,—which ended only after midnight,—at Mrs. Curtiss James's. I may tell you at once that it was a most brilliant affair, and I would have given anything for you to have been there and seen all that crowd and all that splendour, the very top of the basket of the fashionable and literary circles. All last week there was desperate fighting and

plotting in the N. York society to get invitations. I had the lucky inspiration to refuse to accept any payment; and, my dear, I had a perfect success. I gave a talk and pieces of reading out of *Victory*. After the applause from the audience, which stood up when I appeared, had ceased I had a moment of positive anguish. Then I took out the watch you had given me and laid it on the table, made one mighty effort and began to speak. That watch was the greatest comfort to me. Something of you. I timed myself by it all along. I began at 9.45 and ended exactly at 11. There was a most attentive silence, some laughs and at the end, when I read the chapter of Lena's death, audible snuffling. Then handshaking with 200 people. It was a great experience. On Tuesday we start for a tour towards Boston. They are calling me to go and see Vance. I must end. Love to you, best of darlings.

Your devoted.

To Richard Curle

Effendi Hill.
11. 5. '23.

DEAREST DICK,

Am awfully rushed or else lying prostrate to recover,—but in either case in no writing mood. But I must drop you a line to say that the evening at Mrs. Curtiss James's was a most fashionable affair—and what is more a real success. I gave a talk and readings from *Victory*. One hour and a quarter, with an ovation at the end. They were most attentive. Laughs at proper places and snuffles at the last when I read the whole chapter of Lena's death. It was a great social function and people fought for invitations. I made it clearly understood from the first that I was not doing this sort of thing for money. This gave my visit to U. S. a particular character about which the press spoke out. Generally my reception in the papers was wonderful. F. N. D. himself is impressed.

My love to you.

P. S. Leaving on motor tour New Engd. and Boston on the 15th. About 10 days. Remember me to the Wedgwoods.

To Eric Pinker

11. 5. '23.
Effendi Hill, Oyster Bay,
Long Island, New York.

Starting for Boston and
N. Engd. ten days' tour on
the 15th. Going to see
Vance to-day.

DEAREST ERIC,

Just a word to say that my talk and reading from *Victory* at Mrs. Curtiss James's was a complete success. I think I acted in accordance with your feeling by declining all payment. This is the "note" of my visit here. It is greatly appreciated. The affair was very splendid and I only wished your wife and you had been there. She would have been amused and you would have been pleased.

I bear in mind all you have said and govern myself accordingly. We must have a long talk, the first thing on my return.

My love to you both, to Ralph and to the ladies at Burys Court.

To Mrs. Joseph Conrad

Effendi Hill.
14. 5. '23.

MY DEAREST, BEST OF GIRLS,

Since the evening at Mrs. C. James's I have been leading a very quiet life here. Some visitors, mostly journalists, did come. Very nice fellows. Morley too showed up for one afternoon and signed for us the little book of verse. He is really a good fellow.

Thanks for your cable saying "Bobby satisfied Love" which came over the 'phone wire from Garden City on Saturday morning. As days go on I am missing you more and more,—tho' indeed I could not have been looked after better by brother and sister than I am by F. N. D. and Mrs. Doubleday, whom I am now calling Florence,—by request. She sends her love.

The greatest news I have to send you is that these good people have made up their minds to see me actually home themselves. It is arranged therefore that we start on the 2nd June by the White Star boat for

Southampton, where we arrive on the 8th or 9th (I wish it was to-morrow!).

As a matter of fact, to-morrow we start on a motor tour across New England States as far as Boston, where I will just get a sight of Catherine and Mama Grace.[1] Then on the return trip I shall spend two nights and the day between with the Adamses and sign that set of books. From the 25th inst. to the 2nd June I shall keep quiet here.

This is the programme as far as I know it. Don't be disturbed by the shaky handwriting. My wrist is slightly powerless but it is getting better,—and indeed it was never very bad; and for the rest I feel tolerable. The cough has left me almost completely, which is a distinct gain. I keep perfectly "dry,"—drinking tea (excellent) and also water with my meals, with, occasionally, a glass of good cider.

Well,—no more at present, my dearest Chica. I must write a few words to Eric and to Aubry. Send my love to Dick [Curle], and hugs to the boys. I don't know whether I'll have time to write to them by this boat.

No,—I can't say I *regret* coming over here, but the fact is I am growing anxious to get home.

You will be prepared to entertain the D'days perhaps for one night at Oswalds. I will tell you more of this later. Give my love to Audrey and regards to Mr. and Mrs. Reid.

Your ever most devoted.

Remembrances to the staff.

To Mrs. Joseph Conrad

The Copley-Plaza,
Boston, Massachusetts.
Friday, 18th May, '23.

DEAREST JESS,

I am writing this in the hope to catch the mailboat leaving N. York to-morrow (Sat.), but I shall send you a night-radio message to-morrow which you will get on Monday next.

Here I send you only my devoted love and the assurance that I am standing the motor tour very well so far. Before leaving, last Tuesday, I received a letter from you (7th May, I think) and was delighted with the sight of your dear handwriting. Send my dear love to Borys and to John. My thoughts are constantly with you all.

[1] Mrs. and Miss Willard, Joseph Conrad's American friends in London who were then in Boston.

In the midst of new scenes my mind remains fixed on your dear person at Oswalds.

On Monday (21st) we leave here and on Tuesday morning I will be with the Adamses in the country and stay there till Thursday morning. He will have the set there for me to sign. On Friday evening we will be back at Effendi Hill,—where I shall stay quietly till my departure on the 2nd. Doubledays are coming over with me. We shall have to entertain them one night, at least.

Give my special love to Audrey and remembrances to the "faithful retainers."

Ever your devoted husband.

To Mrs. Joseph Conrad

New York.
24th May, 1923.

MY VERY OWN DEAR JESS,

. . . Don't imagine, my dearest, that the delights of this country make me forget my home,—which is where you are: and indeed is nothing to me but you, you alone wherever you may be. Consider, dear, that I am in a strange country on Long Island where I do not know where the nearest P. office is,—miles off probably: that the postal arrangements are very primitive and that I am at the mercy of people around me. Garden City is 15 miles from here. During our tour it was just the same and you know the hotels have no letter boxes and I am not the sort of person that can rush out at the last minute and post a letter. I have been looked after like an infant, I must say, but I have been also helpless like an infant in a way. I have also had an enormous amount of correspondence which had to be attended to, if this visit is to do any good. The Garden City staff dealt with some of it. F. N. D. also took some off my hands, but what had to be left to me was an immense pile every day.

I can't give you the slightest idea how impatient I am to get back to you. I think of nothing else. The time seems interminable and yet the visit is a success.

When I arrived I was not feeling well. Now I do,—as long as I have not to exert myself. Upon the whole I have improved in health: but what it really amounts to I cannot say, and, truth to say, I am not much concerned. What I am concerned about is your poor leg,—your treatment, your prospects of final cure.

Saw in Boston (last Saturday) Mama Grace and Cath. Both are

looking well, both send you their warmest love. On Sunday, dinner-party (12) at Mrs. Loring's (ex Miss Page). She has turned out a charming woman. She and Mrs. Page send you their affectionate regards. I assure you that you are not forgotten. So do the Adamses with whom I stayed two nights and a day (Tuesday). Talked much of you. The baby really charming and loves its doll.

I must confess that I am heartily sick of all this infinite kindness. It is overwhelming simply. And yet it must be acknowledged. The D'days have actually planned coming over for no other purpose but to see me safely home! Of course they will make a stay but of no more than a fortnight. My dear, you must prepare yourself to entertain them for two nights and the day between, which will very likely be Tuesday the 12th or Wednesday the 13th. So, dearest, make preparations to get some extra help and arrange for them to have the spare room and B.'s room and generally the use of that end of the house with the bathroom. Of course I have fixed no date positively. I said it must depend on how I find you. I hope to be with you, dearest, on Sat. 9th for lunch,—unless the ship is late. She may be as she has to call at Cherbourg and may be delayed there. We will talk all these matters over. How awfully far off it seems yet!! Oh! my dear, I am yours in heart and soul, most devoted.

Tell the boys of my return and give them severe hugs from me. Kind regards to the faithful staff.

To Elbridge L. Adams

31 May, '23.
Effendi Hill,
New York.

MY DEAR ADAMS,

Your good letter in the name of you both reached me yesterday. I am ashamed of not having written to you and your dear wife before. I put it off from day to day in the hope of finding a really "free" moment in which I could attempt to express to you my gratitude for your gift of warm friendship and charming hospitality. But that hope must be given up. Even now I am oppressed by the prospect of a dozen or more of letters to write—and by the packing which has to be done to-day.

So a short word of "thanks" must do; and I put into its accent all the depth of sincerity which it can carry in its six letters. May the blessings of peace and contentment attend the life of comparative retirement which you intend to lead, and extend to your posterity, of which Ann is such a lovely and lovable representative. I beg Margery to give her a kiss from me.

I shall try to give Jessie some idea of your delightful home and its rural surroundings.

If you ever have photos taken of your abode please send them to us for my American album. We shall look forward to important good news from you before very long. I must ask you too to send me a copy of the pamphlet, when it appears, signed by you, for deposition in the "family archives," so that my descendants should have this record of our friendship and of your view of me, and transmit it to their posterity.

I am going away with a strong impression of American large-heartedness and generosity. I have not for a moment felt like a stranger in this great country, about the future of which no sensible man would dare to speculate. But no sensible man would doubt its significance in the history of mankind. I am proud to have had from it an unexpected warmth of public recognition and the gift of precious private friendships. I kiss Margery's hands and grasp both yours in farewell and recommend myself and all mine to your kind and unfailing memory.

Your affectionate and grateful friend.

To G. Jean-Aubry

Oswalds
July 7th, 1923

MON TRÈS CHER,

I must dictate this, for writing is still very difficult. And I dictate it in English because it is easier to dictate. You will forgive me.

I quite imagine how busy you must be in Paris. *C'est dans votre caractère.* I never remember you otherwise but with your hands full. It was very good of you to find time for your most welcome letter. I can't imagine how the tale of a visit to Paris had got about.[1] I would certainly like to go there, but it is out of the question for the present.

I have done nothing but a short and insignificant article for an Am.[erican] paper, and I certainly do not feel very happy just now.

Please, my dear Jean, come to see us as soon as you can after your return to London, which will be, I reckon, about the 20th of this month. I hope meantime to get hold of *Suspense* again and be in a better frame of mind.

Jessie sends you her love.

Je vous embrasse.,
Votre vieux Conrad

[1] It had been announced in some French newspapers that Joseph Conrad was to go to Paris, and a group of literary people there had already planned a reception in his honour.

To Richard Curle

Oswalds.
July 14th, 1923.

MY DEAREST DICK,

I am returning you the article with two corrections as to matters of fact and one of style.[1]

As it stands I can have nothing against it. As to my feelings that is a different matter; and I think that, looking at the intimate character of our friendship and trusting to the indulgence of your affection, I may disclose them to you without reserve.

My point of view is that this is an opportunity, if not unique then not likely to occur again in my lifetime. I was in hopes that on a general survey it could also be made an opportunity for me to get freed from that infernal tail of ships and that obsession of my sea life, which has about as much bearing on my literary existence, on my quality as a writer, as the enumeration of drawing rooms which Thackeray frequented could have had on his gift as a great novelist. After all, I may have been a seaman, but I am a writer of prose. Indeed, the nature of my writing runs the risk of being obscured by the nature of my material. I admit it is natural; but only the appreciation of a special personal intelligence can counteract the superficial appreciation of the inferior intelligence of the mass of readers and critics. Even Doubleday was considerably disturbed by that characteristic as evidenced in press notices in America, where such headings as "Spinner of sea yarns—master mariner—seaman writer," and so forth, predominated. I must admit that the letter-press had less emphasis than the headings; but that was simply because they didn't know the facts. That the connection of my ships with my writings stands, with my concurrence I admit, recorded in your book is of course a fact. But that was biographical matter, not literary. And where it stands it can do no harm. Undue prominence has been given to it since, and yet you know yourself very well that in the body of my work barely one tenth is what may be called sea stuff, and even of that, the bulk, that is *Nigger* and *Mirror,* has a very special purpose which I emphasize myself in my Prefaces.

Of course there are seamen in a good many of my books. That doesn't make them sea stories any more than the existence of de Barral in *Chance* (and he occupies there as much space as Captain Anthony) makes that novel a story about the financial world. I do wish that all those ships of mine were given a rest, but I am afraid that when

[1] This refers to an article which Richard Curle wrote in the *Times* Literary Supplement as a review of the whole of the J. M. Dent & Sons Uniform Edition of the Works of Joseph Conrad.

the Americans get hold of them they will never, never, never get a rest.

The summarizing of Prefaces, though you do it extremely well, has got this disadvantage, that it doesn't give their atmosphere, and indeed it cannot give their atmosphere, simply because those pages are an intensely personal expression, much more so than all the rest of my writing, with the exception of the *Personal Record,* perhaps. A question of policy arises there; whether it is a good thing to give people the bones, as it were. It may destroy their curiosity for the dish. I am aware, my dear Richard, that while talking over with you the forthcoming article, I used the word historical in connection with my fiction, or with my method, or something of the sort. I expressed myself badly, for I certainly had not in my mind the history of the books. What I was thinking at the time was a phrase in a long article in the *Seccolo.* The critic remarked that there was no difference in method or character between my fiction and my professedly autobiographical matter, as evidenced in the *Personal Record.* He concluded that my fiction was not historical of course but had an authentic quality of development and style which in its ultimate effect resembled historical perspective.

My own impression is that what he really meant was that my manner of telling, perfectly devoid of familiarity as between author and reader, aimed essentially at the intimacy of a personal communication, without any thought for other effects. As a matter of fact, the thought for effects is there all the same (often at the cost of mere directness of narrative), and can be detected in my unconventional grouping and perspective, which are purely temperamental and wherein almost all my "art" consists. This, I suspect, has been the difficulty the critics felt in classifying it as romantic or realistic. Whereas, as a matter of fact, it is fluid, depending on grouping (sequence) which shifts, and on the changing lights giving varied effects of perspective.

It is in those matters gradually, but never completely, mastered that the history of my books really consists. Of course the plastic matter of this grouping and of those lights has its importance, since without it the actuality of that grouping and that lighting could not be made evident, any more than Marconi's electric waves could be made evident without the sending-out and receiving instruments. In other words, without mankind my art, an infinitesimal thing, could not exist.

All this, my dear fellow, has apparently no reference to your article, but truly enough is extracted from me by a consideration of your article. My dearest fellow, I cannot (I would never dream!) tell you what to publish and what not to publish; but as far as America is concerned I am a little bit alarmed, for the reason stated above. I would take the privilege of our friendship to point out to you that things written for

a friend in a copy of a book, in a particular mood and in the assurance of not being misunderstood, look somewhat different in cold print. And then I wonder whether, quoting me as an authority on myself, it is a discreet thing to do. I always come back to my first statement that this is an opportunity that will never be renewed in my lifetime for the judgment of a man who certainly knows my work best and not less certainly is known for my closest intimate, but before all is the best friend my work has ever had.

Jessie and I are very delighted at your having met B. in that friendly manner, and by your good impression as to his health and his optimistic mood. I went up yesterday in the hope and indeed for the purpose of bringing about a personal interview. That's why I did not tell you of my coming. I was somewhat affected by the heat and bolted home by the 4.20. My wrist has got achey again or else I would have written in pen and ink, and I trust expressed myself better.

To Miss Watson[1]

Oswalds, 15. 7. '23.

MY DEAR LORNA,

You will think I have neglected you heartlessly in your trouble. No, my dear. My sympathy was with you every day, but I had some trouble of my own of the mind (not broken bones) that prevented me using the pen.

Did the heat worry you much? Perhaps you have a nice airy room? I have to tell you that here the very gardens (we have three) felt hot and stuffy. My chauffeur's puppy would not play: Mrs. Conrad's chickens did nothing but stand in the shade and yawn: the flowers drooped their heads and no bird would touch a crumb on the lawn. And some of them were very good crumbs too. At 2 P. M. on Thursday last I watched from my chair a wagtail crossing our so-called tennis-court. He could hardly put one foot before the other; he was positively dragging his tail after him. I suppose no such sight was ever seen since the creation of wagtails. I could not bear it. I closed my eyes; and when I opened them (3 hours afterwards) the wagtail was not to be seen anywhere. I wish I knew what became of him.

What a tragic mystery.

I hope, my dear, your father and mother will bring you and your sisters here when you are well. It would be nice to see you running

[1] The daughter of Conrad's friends, the Watsons, granddaughter of Sir Robert Jones, the surgeon. Miss Watson was then eleven years old.

as if nothing had ever been the matter. Give my dear love to your Grandfather but don't tell him the story of the wagtail. He may not believe it,—and that would hurt my feelings.

Your affectionate old friend.

To Mrs. F. N. Doubleday

15. 7. '23, Oswalds.

The Oswaldians,
a serial
(not for the press)

MY DEAR FLORENCE,

I missed a mail in my answer to your delightful postscript in F. N. D.'s letter because it went too much against the grain to communicate with you by dictation.

I am trying to forget the distance that separates me from you and F. N. D. It is too many miles and too many days not to depress one somewhat. When I think that it will be more than a week before you read this I feel like a man separated from his friends by an enormous and bottomless chasm and trying to shout across. Very poor comfort that, even if you are sure that your voice will carry so far. The futility of shouting as a means of expressing one's deeper sentiments, such as affection, for instance, comes home to one appallingly. However I must begin my shouting before my heart fails me.

Imprimis: the Safford women came, conquered—and went. Of course everything that's nice goes too soon. They were both perfectly delightful —mother and child. We got all extremely chummy together in no time, in the warm whiff of the Effendi Hill atmosphere they brought with them, and in the evocation of certain (invisible) personalities: R. F. & F., P. & N. round whom our talk revolved. In the afternoon Miss Hallowes took them over to Canterbury for a visit to the Cathedral. I don't know what their appreciation of Gothic architecture may be but I know that they were very much amused by the verger who took them round. He, I believe, was Gothic too. In the evening we talked late. Later still (at one o'clock in the morning) I detected a flow of lively murmurs in Jessie's bedroom. I put in just a little ferocity into the polite tone of my remark (through the closed door) that it was time for travellers to be in bed. Then a great silence fell on Oswalds and my conscience found peace. Cornelia had the sense to retire at 9. She is a dear. On parting we fell into each other's arms; and I must say that tho' Mrs. Safford is just right as she is I regretted she could not go

back to her twelfth year for a moment and be hugged too before being helped into the car. I helped her in "frigidly" (that is in comparison with my feelings); the saturnine Charles pressed the throttle. . . .

We had charming letters from both of them from Paris. . . . (To be continued.)

Jessie's love to you both. Give Effendi a slap on the back from me. The hearty kind you know. He is great—that's settled! I kiss your hands and am always your most faithful friend and devoted servant.

To Richard Curle

Oswalds,
July 17th, 1923.

DEAREST DICK,

Thank you very much for your letter. I am afraid that my mind being very full of your article at this, what I consider as a critical period in the fate of my works I absolutely forgot to thank you for the successful negotiation with the *Daily Mail;* though I meant to do it and, as a matter of fact, have been under the impression that I had done it.

I am afraid, my dear, that you think that I am unduly worrying about the affair of publicity for my uniform edition here; but you understand that the moment is perhaps critical. It may fix my position with the buying public. I have always tried to counteract the danger of precise classification, either in the realm of exotism or of the sea; and in the course of years here and there I have had helpful paragraphs and articles in that sense. But they never amounted to much. Neither were my protests very effective. Truly I made no special efforts. But the situation is now worth the trouble of special handling. I don't mean on the point of literary appreciation, but simply of *classification.* You know how the public mind fastens on externals, on mere facts, such for instance as ships and voyages, without paying attention to any deeper significance they may have. If Richmond[1] really wants this, you ought certainly to send it to him. But I should have thought that his public is rather select and, in a sense, literary. It certainly will draw attention to the Edition, but the question is, in which way? I have visited many foreign places and have been on board many ships. But so has the author of *Captain Kettle,* of whom it used to be frequently stated that he "made a point of covering ten thousand miles of new ground every year." The bulk of my last letter to you, my dear Dick, was not so much a suggestion as a sort of thinking aloud, for which I feel called to apologize, mainly on the ground that you knew all that before and indeed had

[1] The editor of the *Times* Literary Supplement.

thought all that out for yourself. But if I may make a suggestion, what do you think of this?—Suppose you opened by a couple of short paragraphs of general observation on authors and their material, how they transform it from particular to general, and appeal to universal emotions by the temperamental handling of personal experience. You might also say that not everybody can do that, and then you might say "look at Conrad, whose new edition is coming out. It is a case in point. His prefaces are now for the first time made accessible to the public, very characteristic of him and of special interest as he gives in many of them the genesis of the books, the history of initial suggestions. But all his stories expand far beyond their frame and appeal to no special public—looking for exotism, or adventure, or the sea—but to all of us who, etc., etc. . . ." All this of course short and even crude, if you like. You do know how to write pregnant sentences. Then the rest of the article a little shortened, as, for instance, by cutting out all mention of stories of which I say distinctly that I have no comment to make. Thus Richmond will get what he wants and you may save my hide from being permanently tarred.

The article being reproduced their brains will fasten on every geographical or ship's name connected with "Captain" Conrad, and the end of it as it stands now they will not only fail to understand, but they won't *see* at all. For it isn't a "story." This damned sea business keeps off as many people as it gathers in. It may have been otherwise twenty-five years ago. Now the glamour is worn off; and even twenty-five years ago the sea-glamour did not do much for the *Nigger*.

But I daresay I am making all this fuss for nothing, and besides no man can escape his fate.

Jessie sends her love.

To Richard Curle

Oswalds, 22. 7. '23.

DEAREST DICK,

The article as amended and added to by you is first rate.

I have ventured to compose the pars. relating to *M. of the S.* and *P. R.*[1] If your conviction will let them stand I would be glad. In a few other places I ventured a line or two in pen and ink.

As to *No.*[2] If I ever mentioned 12 hours it must relate to P. Cabello where I was ashore about that time. In Laguayra as I went up the hill and had a distant view of Caracas I must have been 2½ to 3 days. It's

[1] *The Mirror of the Sea* and *A Personal Record.*

[2] *Nostromo.*

such a long time ago! And there were a few hours in a few other places on that dreary coast of Venla.[1]

Thanks a thousand times, my dear fellow, for your work and thought and your inexhaustible patience. We are looking forward to your arrival on Sat.—or will it be Friday? Please drop me a line.

Would you mind to have the article typed in 2 cop. at my expense?

I feel very depressed about the new edition, for typographical reasons. In the "double" vols. the 2nd. work has no title page. My annoyance is extreme. The thing was understood.

To Ambrose J. Barker

Oswalds, Sept. 1st, 1923.

DEAR MR. BARKER,

Thank you very much for your letter and the pamphlet in which I was very much interested.[2]

As a matter of fact I never knew anything of what was called, if I remember rightly, the "Greenwich Bomb Outrage." I was out of England when it happened, and thus I never read what was printed in the newspapers at the time. All I was aware of was the mere fact—my novel being, in intention, the history of Winnie Verloc. I hope you have seen that the purpose of the book was *not* to attack any doctrine, or even the men holding that doctrine. My object, apart from the aim of telling a story, was to hold up the worthlessness of certain individuals and the baseness of some others. It was a matter of great interest to me to see how near actuality I managed to come in a work of imagination.

I hope you will do me the pleasure to accept the book I am sending you—which is also a work of pure imagination though very different in subject and treatment from the *Secret Agent*.[3]

P. S. I suppose you meant me to keep the pamphlet, which I would like to paste into my own copy of the novel.

[1] Venezuela.

[2] A pamphlet on the attempt to blow up the Greenwich observatory which was made in January, 1894. The pamphlet quotes the *Times* description of the perpetrator of the crime, which bears an extraordinary likeness to Stevie in *The Secret Agent:* "He could hardly have been more than twenty-two. The hair and moustache were silky and fair, he had no beard, his eyes were blue."

[3] It refers to *The Rover*.

To Ford Madox Ford

Oct. 23, 1923.

Forgive me for answering your interesting holograph letter on the machine. I don't like to delay any longer telling you how pleased I am to know you have got hold of such interesting work and that in conditions which will permit you to concentrate your mind on it in peace and comfort. My warmest wishes for its success. I won't tell you that I am honoured or flattered by having my name included amongst your contributors, but I will tell you that I consider it a very friendly thing on your part to wish to do so.

I don't think your memory renders me justice as to my attitude to the early *E. R.*[1] The early *E. R.* is the only literary business that, in Bacon's phraseology, "came home to my bosom." The mere fact that it was the occasion of you putting on me that gentle but persistent pressure which extracted from the depths of my then despondency the stuff of the *Personal Record* would be enough to make its memory dear. Do you care to be reminded that the editing of the first number was finished in that farmhouse we occupied near Luton? You arrived one evening with your amiable myrmidons and parcels of copy. I shall never forget the cold of that night, the black grates, the guttering candles, the dimmed lamps—and the desperate stillness of that house, where women and children were innocently sleeping, when you sought me out at 2 A M. in my dismal study to make me concentrate suddenly on a two-page notice of the *"Ile des Pingouins."* A marvellously successful instance of the editorial tyranny! I suppose you were justified. The number one of the *E. R.* could not have come out with two blank pages in it. It would have been too sensational. I have forgiven long ago.

My only grievance against the early *E. R.* is that it didn't last long enough. If I say that I am curious to see what you will make of this venture it isn't because I have the slightest doubts of your consistency. You have a perfect right to say that you are "rather unchangeable." Unlike the Serpent (which is wise) you will die in your original skin. So I have no doubt that the *Review* will be truly Fordian—at all costs. But for one of your early men it will be interesting to see what men you will find now and what you will get out of them in these changed times.

I am afraid the source of the *Personal Record* fount is dried up. Thanks for your proposal. I'd like to do something for the sake of old times—but I daresay I am not worth having now. I'll drop you a line in a day or two. My mind is a blank at this moment.

[1] *The English Review.*

To F. N. Doubleday

Oswalds, Nov. 20th, 1923.

DEAR EFFENDI,

All of you who went must have had a tense sort of evening at that sale.[1] Was the atmosphere vibrating with excitement, or, on the contrary, still with awe? Did any of the bidders faint? Did the auctioneer's head swell visibly? Did Quinn enjoy his triumph lying low like Brer Rabbit, or did he enjoy his glory in public and give graciously his hand to kiss to the multitude of inferior collectors who never, never, never, dreamt of such a coup? Well, it is a wonderful adventure to happen to a still-living (or at any rate half-alive) author.

The reverberation in the press here was very great indeed; and the result is that lots of people, who never heard of me before, now know my name, and thousands of others, who could not have read through a page of mine without falling into convulsions, are proclaiming me a very great author. And there are a good many also whom nothing will persuade that the whole thing was not a put-up job and that I haven't got my share of the plunder.

However, I must say that I have received many letters of condolence and sympathy. Altogether I have had an amazing time, while Jessie, without loss of time, sent a 500-word article on the preservation of those manuscripts of the *Daily Mail*. The Editor[2] wrote to congratulate her on her journalistic instinct. The check for it will come in due course and ought to keep her in chocolates for a long time.

I have been downstairs for more than ten days and am beginning to feel better. Your letters containing good news and evidencing your more than friendly care for my reputation and fortune in America helped to carry me over the bad time. Amongst the correspondence received I have had also a letter from Sudler, with the proof of the drawings for *Nostromo* frontispiece according to my suggestion. I have also had a few other frontispieces, very good reproductions of various photographs. Would you, dear Effendi, send me two complete sets, as each of my boys clamours for one? Borys wants to frame them and hang them up in his new home, and John declares that he will want them to decorate his "diggings" when he settles in Coventry as a pupil of the Daimler Co.

We had the pleasure of receiving here Mr. Maule, whom all of us like. I did not talk much business with him, as we both agreed that all the material points have been settled and he had to catch an early after-

[1] John Quinn's sale of Conrad MSS.

[2] The Literary Editor.

noon train back to town. I told him however that I had sent back the *Monitor* article to you with a few minor suggestions. He seemed pleased to hear it.

The day approaches for *The Rover* to look the public in the eye, and, if possible, to hit it in the most sensitive spot. Tell me, dear Effendi, if I am entitled to any copies of the limited edition. If so I would be glad to have them, for there are one or two persons whose sensibilities I should like to hit by a presentation copy of a special kind.

On this side what is annoying is the confounded general election, which will get in the way of everything for a week or two. We have given permission to put off publication to the 2nd Jan. 1924. I don't know what F. U.[1] will decide to do.

I perceive I must stop this talking if I want to catch the Friday boat. It is only since my visit to you, my dear friend, that I have realized how far America is from Bishopsbourne—so much of my heart has been left out there!

P. S. Tell H. H. the Ranee of Effendi Hill that her faithful servant was immensely impressed by her get-up on the photograph taken at The Readery. Does she put it on to read? . . . But I will restrain my impudence till next time. My love to her.

To Edward Garnett

Oswalds, Bishopsbourne, Kent.
Dec. 4th, 1923.

MY DEAREST EDWARD,

I am so sorry I cannot answer you by hand. I have been flattened out more than I can remember by this last bout.

The generosity of your criticism, my dear Edward, is great enough to put heart into a dead man. As I have not claimed to be more than only half-dead for the last month, I feel, after reading your letter, like a man with wings. Every word of your commendation has electrified the dulled fibres of my being. My absolute belief in your sincerity in questions of literary art has relieved me of that load of weary doubt which I have not been able to shake off before. It relieved me thoroughly, because the belief in the absolute unflawed honesty of your judgment has been one of the mainstays of my literary life. Even if led astray, even if apparently mistaken, there is that in you which remains impeccable in its essence. In all your literary judgments there is never anything suspect.

[1] Fisher Unwin, the publisher.

Your very prejudices are genuinely personal and, in a manner of speaking, can be thoroughly trusted.

Therefore I gather like a real treasure all the words of commendation you give to Catherine, Arlette, and the doctrinaire Réal.[1] I gather them the more eagerly because what I most feared in the secret of my heart was an impression of sketchiness. This is perhaps my only work in which brevity was a conscious aim. I don't mean compression. I mean brevity *ab initio,* in the very conception, in the very manner of thinking about the people and the events. I am glad you find Peyrol captivating; and indeed I am made glad by all the appreciative remarks you make, which are much, very much beyond my highest expectations; though of course, my dear, I won't pretend I did not know that you would be looking for good points and make the most of them; for nothing can be less doubtful to me than your affection and your amazing faculty of comprehension. What you say about the English side of the book—the fleet, the Vincent scenes, etc.—shows how you do marvellously respond to the slightest shades, the faintest flavours, the simplest indications of sentiment underlying the action. My dear Edward, it is good to write while there is a reader like you about.

And of course your critical ability, that very sensitiveness in response, has made you put your finger on the weak spot. I can honestly say that I did see it myself, but not so clearly as since I have read your letter. You were not likely to miss Scevola, and, by Jove, now you have uttered the words he does look to me like a bit of a "scarecrow of the Revolution." Yet it was not my intention. It is not the fault of the original conception but the fault of presentation of the literary treatment. But apart from that, to take him fundamentally—pray look at my difficulty! Postulating that Arlette had to remain untouched, the terrorist that brought her back could have been nothing else than what he is or the book would have had to be altogether different. To me S. is not revolutionary, he is, to be frank about it, a pathological case more than anything else. I won't go into a deeper exposition. Your intelligence will take the hint at once. The situation at Escampobar could not have lasted seven or eight years if S. had been formidable. But he was never formidable except as a creature of mob psychology. Away from the mob he is just a weak-minded creature. As you know, there were many like that. I tried to give a hint of it in what Catherine says about him: "the butt of all the girls," "always mooning about," "ran away from his home to join the Revolution." He is weak-minded in a way as much as my poor

[1] Characters in *The Rover.*

Michel, the man with the dog, whose resigned philosophy was that "somebody must be last." Even amongst terrorists S. was considered a poor creature. But his half-witted soul received the impress of the Revolution, which had missed the simple-minded Michel altogether. I never intended S. to be a figure of the Revolution. As a matter of fact if there is a child of the Revolution at all, it is Réal, with his austere and pedantic turn of mind and conscience. The defect of Scevola, my dear Edward, is, alas, in the treatment, which instead of half-pathetic makes him half-grotesque; and no amount of wriggling and explaining will do away with the fact that so far he is a failure. A created figure that requires explaining to Edward Garnett *is* a failure. That is my sincere conviction. But as to a "formidable" Scevola . . .

Yes, my dear, I know you will believe me when I tell you that I had a momentary vision of quite a great figure worthy of Peyrol; the notion of a struggle between the two men. But I did deliberately shut my eyes to it. It would have required another canvas. No use talking about it. How long would I have had to wait for that moment?—and the mood of the other was there, more in accord with my temperament, more also with my secret desire to achieve a feat of artistic brevity, once at least, before I died. And on those grounds I believe you will forgive me for having rejected probably a greater thing—or perhaps only a different one.

What I regret now is the rejection of a half-thought-out scene, four pages or so, between Catherine and Scevola. But when it came to me the development of the story was already marked and the person of Catherine established psychologically as she is now. That scene would have checked the movement and damaged the conception of Catherine. It would have been, and it would have looked, a thing "inserted." I was feeling a little bit heartsick then, too, and anxious also to demonstrate to myself as soon as possible that I could finish a piece of work. So I let it go.

Here you have, my dear Edward, the confession of my weaknesses in connection with the secret history of *The Rover*. Had I been writing with pen and ink I would probably come nearer to expressing myself. You can form no idea of how much your letter has eased and comforted me, even physically. It was good of you to have written at once and while (as you say) "heavy with a cold." I hope it isn't the beginning of anything. I hope, too, my dear, that you will be able to let me have a look at you soon. As soon as you like. You know, it won't be really safe for me to come up to town for quite a long time.

My love to you.

To Arnold Bennett

Oswalds.
5, Dec., '23.

MY DEAR BENNETT,

This, my latest, is remarkable mainly for a howling anachronism in the first twenty lines;[1] but it is not on that ground that I "obtrude it on your notice" (pretty *cliché,* that).

No. It is because I feel (why conceal it?) that twilight lies already on these pages. Perhaps it is not unfitting that the man who for twenty years or more gave to my work so many proofs of his appreciation should now accept this book from my hand.

To F. N. Doubleday

Oswalds.
Dec. 6th, 1923.

VERY DEAR EFFENDI,

This is in answer to your letter of Nov. 22nd which reached me on the 3rd of this month. *Victory* (2 cops.) and *Lord Jim* (2 cops.), of the Concord Edition, arrived by the same mail but did not reach this house till the day after. I honestly think that it is a remarkable production and I must say that I am pleased with every feature, the cloth, the paper, the Minute Man under the title, the title-page itself, the fount, the spacing of the lines which is just right, and the proportions of the margins. The jacket too is nice with its simple landscape. I must also mention the back, which avoids being dead flat in a very pleasing manner. I am quite impressed by the consistent attention to detail which is visible in the finished product. Let me tell you, Effendi, that I feel I never had such a birthday present in my life.

I was touched by the congratulatory wire from Florence and you. The day was not marked by any festivities. In fact I had managed to forget it. Jessie came into my room at seven o'clock (which is not her usual practice) and I just simply asked her what was the matter? She said "I thought I would be the first to see you to-day." The word birthday was not mentioned. It is forbidden in the family by a decree which I promulgated on my 50th birthday. Both boys, though, managed to get in a letter to me, apparently about nothing in particular, just expressing the hope that I was better.

[1] In *The Rover* the word "chain," which had to be replaced by "cable."

As a matter of fact I was then getting better and I was well enough to-day to drive as far as the polling station and record my vote. The day is mild, luminously gray, with a pleasant temperature and no wind. The elements are favourable to this election. We shall see what will come of it. It is very obvious that 90% of the electors cannot possibly form any reasoned judgment on the issue. There has been quite a lot of hearty and conscientious lying about it. And this is as it should be; for, in economical problems, what is true to-day may be quite untrue in another three months' time.

The poor *Rover* came out in the middle of that scrimmage, just as the old man himself returned right in the middle of a revolution. But I can't say he arrived unperceived. The daily press gave him the best send-off it could under the circumstances, half columns and three-quarter columns and shorter notices—whatever space could be spared—on the day of publication. Criticism laudatory and benevolent, but (speaking in all humility) rather unintelligent. From Edward Garnett I had a private letter which braced me up morally and physically; for Edward's sincerity is above suspicion. But it isn't so much the press, which had not yet the time to have its say, but the general impression that the name of the book is, as it were, vibrating in the air that is most cheering. There is also the valuable commercial fact of the heavy subscription in advance, amounting in itself, I believe, to more than six months' sales of *The Arrow of Gold.*

This, my dear Effendi, is all my news. I am now on the up grade and don't anticipate any set-back. Neither do I expect to do any work this month, because it must take some time to recover the creative tone. And you know that in many ways, pleasant and unpleasant, I have had a rather strenuous year.

It is settled that Epstein will come down to make my bust. I couldn't resist Muirhead Bone's pleading. I shall see something of M. B. because the whole family is going to stay in Canterbury for the Christmas week. I send you both here the season's conventional wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, but you know that I am always with you both, in heart and mind, and shall always be "till death doth us part."

To R. B. Cunninghame Graham

Oswalds,
12. 12. 23.

TRÈS CHER AMI,

We are much relieved by your news. I curse myself for a dismal crock who can't go to see a friend in trouble.

I assume that the horse actually went down and you alighted *parado*.

I hope to goodness he didn't roll over you.

I shall hope for a line from you soon.

Mrs. Dummett wrote me a most charming letter. So I see I am pardoned.

Epstein [1] I believe is going to operate on me now. I have been told that Title's drawing of you is good.

To Arnold Bennett

Oswalds,
20. 12. '23.

MY DEAR BENNETT,

Warmest thanks for the inscribed book [2]—the first presentation copy since the treasured *Leonora* you gave me twenty-two or three years ago!

We haven't been throwing our works at each other's heads!—yet no man's work has been more present to my thoughts. Only I am a dumb sort of beast; while you could always find time to speak of me in words which I'll never forget.

Sorry to hear you have been seedy. I hope you are definitely on the mend.

I have had a beastly time of it for the last month. Too much pain to think, too much pain to read—and almost to care. However, that is over apparently.

Affctly yours.

To Arnold Bennett

Oswalds,
2 Jany., '24.

MY DEAR BENNETT,

I am wholly delighted with your R. S.[3] Wholly. You will give me credit for not having missed any special gems, but it is the whole achievement as I went from page to page that secured my admiration.

As I closed the book at 7 in the morning after the shortest sleepless night of my experience, a thought passed through my head that I knew pretty well my "Bennett militant" and that, not to be too complimentary,

[1] Jacob Epstein, the sculptor.

[2] A copy of *Riceyman Steps* with the inscription: "Joseph Conrad from his faithful admirer, Arnold Bennett. Xmas 1923."

[3] *Riceyman Steps*.

he was a pretty good hand at it; but that there I had "Bennett triumphant" without any doubt whatever. A memorable night.

Don't imagine that this is the morbid receptivity of an invalid. In fact I have been captious and *"grincheux"* for days, as is always the case when I am not well. *Entre-nous* I feel as if I were fighting my Verdun battle with my old enemy. It isn't that the symptoms are unusually severe, but it goes on and on. . . . I begin to wonder whether I have sufficient reserves. But I am not hopeless. Only I feel unfit to talk to you about the book as it deserves and as I would like to talk of it. There is no doubt that there is something quintessential about it. They of that created group don't want any official papers *pour se légitimer.* Each and all are unquestionable and unanswerable.

Always with my real affection. . . .

P. S. Did I thank you for your letter about *The Rover?* It was the greatest comfort.

To Mr. and Mrs. F. N. Doubleday

Oswalds.
Jan. 7th, 1924.

DEAR FLORENCE AND EFFENDI,

One is not naturally very eager to send cheerless accounts, but I suppose the truth must be told some time or other. After all it isn't so very bad; yet it's a fact that I have been more or less confined to my room for the last fortnight. Aubry arrived on the 22nd, to spend Christmas with us, and found me in bed; but on Xmas Day I came down to share in the Xmas middle-day dinner, the company being eight, including those two crocks the host and hostess, Aubry and our John, and the four Muirhead Bones, who came over from Canterbury, where they were staying in rooms over the Xmas week. It wasn't a rowdy revel, the major part of the company drinking water steadily, but there were mince pies and a certain affectation of cheerfulness. Your munificent presents were displayed, and John was playing tunes (whether sacred or profane, I am not sure) on the heavenly gong. Much talk about the Doubledays, with references to other inhabitants of the New World.

But next day Jessie had to remain upstairs with new and startling symptoms in the state of her limb. A distinct set-back. She has been able to come down for New Year's Day, when the whole tribe of M. Bones lunched with us and some other visitors called in the afternoon. As to myself, without entering into details, I will just tell you that I am now downstairs after another relapse which got hold of me on the 2nd of

January and, judging by my feelings, I think will be definitely the last.

At any rate, I have been out to-day for a drive in the new car, a roomy, old-fashioned affair which I acquired from H. R. H. the Duke of Connaught through the Daimler Company (who were the makers). A great stroke of business, engineered by Borys.

Dr. Fox,[1] who has the most friendly remembrance of you both, has been looking after me with great devotion. You will be pleased to hear that all this long time of trouble doesn't mean anything in the way of a break-up. It is just a period of bad time to get over. As a matter of fact, my blood pressure has hardly altered for the last eight years, and as far as my arteries go I am much younger than my age. The worst, or at any rate the most worrying, feature is a spasmodic affection of the small bronchial tubes, which, of course, causes a bad cough and a sort of semi-asthmatic condition. But even that will be alleviated in time. I confess that the periods of pain have been extremely severe, and only to be compared with a bad illness I had after finishing *Western Eyes* and before I wrote *Chance*. But at that time I was really in danger on account of high temperatures lasting for days. This time there was practically no temperature, and the whole thing has left after it a sense not of bodily exhaustion but of a certain mental languidness, which is passing away.

I have (under Fox's advice) resolved not to hurry and to give myself plenty of time for a thorough recuperation. Ideas and notions stir in my mind, as if that physical shaking had broken down some barrier which had been keeping them back for the last two or three years; but I have made up my mind not to give them their head till I feel confident of making good use of them.

The good news from America has been a great help all through, and I have to thank you all for it. The undoubted success of *The Rover* will I believe be the record for my work on this side.

Everybody who has seen the sample of the Concord Edition you sent me is very fascinated by it. M. Bone, who would not look twice at Dent's ed., has resolved to order one from you. Dick C.,[2] who, as a collector, has of course the Dent edition, would like very much to have this one too. Could we manage, dear Effendi, to present him with one jointly? You sign the first volume of the set and let me pay half the price and I will join my signature to yours. He has been most devoted all this time, even to the point of offering to resign his position in order to take me south. Of course one wouldn't dream of accepting such a suggestion. Going south is not necessary, though it might do good upon the whole. But taking Jessie away from the surgeons who know all about

[1] Dr. Fox, of Ashford, was Conrad's own doctor.

[2] Richard Curle.

her is not to be thought of; and going away without her would do no good either to her or to me.

She has been as usual equably cheerful in regard to both my and her own troubles. She was immensely delighted with your munificent present. While confined upstairs she played various tunes on the musical instrument to let her orders be known in the kitchen. As to myself, I was moved profoundly by the sight of the thermos water-jug. It is exactly like the one I had by my bedside in your house, and brought the old days visibly home to my memory. I didn't actually kiss it (not being sure it was actually the same) but I did stroke it.

The conviction is growing very firm in my mind that those dear Doubledays are good friends to have; on which I end this, sending you our joint love; and shall now try to dictate a few lines before post time to two or three other kind Americans to whom they are due.

Love to dear Patty and no less dear Nelson.

To Captain A. W. Phillips

Oswalds.
Jan. 12th, 1924.

DEAR CAPTAIN PHILLIPS,

I regret to have to dictate this letter to a fellow seaman, and an old *Torrens* boy at that, but my wrist just now cannot stand any prolonged pen work.

It was very kind of you to write to me about your old days—even older than mine—in that ship. I never served with Capt. Angel, though I saw him two or three times on board while the ship was lying in London Dock. Captain Cope, an old friend of mine, commanded her then. It was the voyage after the famous dismasting, just to the N. of the line. The most absurd thing in the world by all accounts; it was only a slight squall. The officer of the watch had just given the order "Stand by the royal halyards" when the outer jib-stay parted and apparently with the jar of it others went and the foremast broke 8 feet above the deck, going clean overboard without even touching the cow-stall, which, probably in your time too, was lashed close to it on the port side. With that everything went on the main above the top, carrying with it the mizzen-topgallantmast. The puff of wind was gone as soon as the masts, and the water was perfectly smooth before and after the accident.

Therefore I had the advantage on joining to find everything practically new—spars and rigging. All that was sent out to her at Pernambuco, where she was towed by a tramp steamer. I don't know for what

reason they rove manila rope for fore and main rigging lanyards. I could never see the advantage of that. It gave me some trouble, especially my first voyage, after lying in Adelaide for a couple of months in perfectly dry, hot weather. The lower rigging hung in bights and I had to set up everything fore and aft before bending the sails for the homeward passage.

Both voyages were uneventful and the passages not very good. From that point of view Capt. Cope was not a lucky man. I share to the full your sentiments about all kinds of mechanical propulsion. It changed the life entirely, and changed also the character of the men. There is not much difference now between a deck and a factory hand.

In the early part of last year I crossed to New York with my old friend Capt. David Bone commanding the *Tuscania.* Of course I was made free of the bridge and the navigation room. I won't say I was not interested. I was, in a way, for about 30 hours till I went twice over all the switches working various gadgets. But I remained cold, completely cold, before all those things which make the position of a ship's officer almost an indoor occupation. It is a fact that one can take a ship along now in white gloves and without, so to speak, opening one's mouth once. There were seven officers there and they were very charming to the old veteran; it was rather a special crowd since only two of them, juniors, had never set foot on the deck of a sailing vessel.

Capt. Bone, who had some ten years of sail, told me that they had wholly lost the "weather sense," that touch with the natural phenomena of wind and sea which was the very breath of our professional life. I was generally in his room when he was interviewing the heads of "departments," and I went also with him on his rounds. Once he made the remark to me that being a ship-master now was not like being in command of a ship but at the head of an administration. However, he told me also that in certain circumstances those big ferry boats required careful handling and that no two of them were alike.

I returned in the *Majestic.* As to that, all I can tell you is that on the 6½ days' passage I hardly put my nose once on deck. It was really too dreary. I met the Captain at a tea-party given by a fashionable lady passenger, but only exchanged a few words with him. He was in a hurry to get away and what I remember best is him telling me that in one way or another the command of a big ship like that was a pretty heavy load on a man's shoulders.

Pardon this long screed. I hope you will have much success and pleasure in the coming yachting season.

To Bruno Winaver

Oswalds.
Jan. 31st, 1924.

My wrist prevents my using the pen, therefore you must accept this dictated letter.

I am delighted to know that my old *Rover* has appealed to you, I conclude æsthetically as well as emotionally, and that my artistic purpose commends itself to your judgment.

As to its adaptability for the stage, I was at first surprised. But on thinking it over I see the possibility, though of course I do not see the way in which it could be visibly presented and spiritually rendered in spoken words. But it is a fact that the book has got very little description, very few disquisitions, and is for the most part in dialogue *en forme parlée*.

I will tell you at once, however, that if it is to be done you are the man to do it. And I hope with all my heart that you will make the attempt, for Poland at any rate.

That would be a matter of arrangement with Angela, whom probably you would find more than willing. But being much impressed by what you say as to the drama possibilities, *Powrotu Korsarza,* I am led to think that if done within ten or eleven months there would be a great chance for it in America. The book there is an immense success, and generally J. C. is receiving immense publicity on account of that particular work. Mere curiosity, as to the visual presentation of a novel so much read and talked about, may create a theatrical success; and if you like to try I will do my part in putting the text of your play exactly as you make it, without the slightest change or alteration, back into English; accepting your construction, and whatever spirit your creative instinct will put into it, without discussion. Of course the English will have to be my own.

I put forward this suggestion because I am interested in seeing what you will do. The American prospect may make it worth your while from a practical point of view.

As to England, I admit that my failure with "The Secret Agent" would be very much against a play with which I had anything to do. *Mais on ne sait jamais!* But I do not think that the Labour Government would forbid the play on the ground that being both Poles we are "horrid aristocrats" and enemies of the virtuous Bolsheviks.

To Charles Chassé

Oswalds.
Jan. 31st, 1924.

MY DEAR SIR,

You must forgive me a dictated letter in English because I do not want to delay in acknowledging your friendly communication, and my wrist does not allow me to hold my pen for any length of time.

Please receive my warm thanks for your article in the *Figaro*. Its sympathy and friendliness are very precious to me. As to the references to my Slavonism, I am certain you wrote in all sincerity, like many English critics who had been raising the same point some years ago, but not so much lately.

For, indeed, talking to you with perfect frankness, as one would to a friend of many years' standing, I have asked myself more than once whether if I had preserved the secret of my origins under the neutral pseudonym of "Joseph Conrad" that temperamental similitude would have been put forward at all. As to myself, I have my doubt. I believe that, here at any rate, what is personal has been put to the account of racial affinities. The critics detected in me a new note and as, just when I began to write, they had discovered the existence of Russian authors, they stuck that label on me under the name of Slavonism. What I venture to say is that it would have been more just to charge me at most with "Polonism." Polish temperament, at any rate, is far removed from Byzantine and Asiatic associations. Poland has absorbed Western ideas, adopted Western culture, sympathized with Western ideals and tendencies as much as it was possible, across the great distances and in the special conditions of its national and political life, whose main task was the struggle for life against Asiatic despotism at its door.

So much for my heredity. As to formulative influences, I must point out that I do not know the Russian language, that I know next to nothing of Russian imaginative literature, except the little I have been able to read in translations; that the formative forces acting on me, at the most plastic and impressionable age, were purely Western: that is French and English: and that, as far as I can remember, those forces found in me no resistance, no vague, deep-seated antagonism, either racial or temperamental.

This is the truth as far as I know. *Mais après tout, vous pouvez avoir raison.* Men have but very little self knowledge, and authors especially are victims of many illusions about themselves. I put before you

my claim to Westernism for no other reason but because I feel myself profoundly in accord with it.

Let me thank you once more for the pleasure your sympathetic appreciation of my work has given me.

To Eric Pinker

Oswalds.
Feb. 3rd, 1924.

DEAR ERIC,

I am glad you like the idea of giving Winaver his head. I have done so, but of course he may be very busy, because he is a hard-working man in journalism and other things. In my letter I said that if it could be done within eleven months it would not be too late to try for a success of curiosity in America, where the people who had read the book would probably go to the theatre too.

I am concentrating all my thoughts on the novel, which certainly by the time it is done will be a biggish thing—I mean in matter and size. I have been reflecting on certain aspects of criticism provoked by *The Rover*. It has dawned upon me that the note of disappointment that has been perceptible simply means that many people (indeed, I believe, the majority of the critics) took it for the long-talked-of-Mediterranean novel. And naturally some of them said: "And is that what it is, then?" I have no doubt at all about it in my mind. *The Rover* suffered in a sense from the confounded prenatal publicity that *Suspense* has evoked simply by being shown about and talked about too much. I too have been guilty of throwing hints. I shouldn't wonder if on its publication there was not a certain amount of feeling that, "Here we've got the right thing." The book may profit by it. I must admit that as the "Napoleonic novel," the great "Mediterranean novel," *The Rover* must have appeared to some people rather slight. Well, they will find weight and body enough in what's coming. I can safely promise that.

To F. N. Doubleday

Oswalds.
Feb. 7th, 1924.

MY DEAR EFFENDI,

I am trying to imagine you two dear people in your Island home, but the difficulty is that I am not certain in my mind whether the house had managed to get itself finished before your migration. My private con-

viction was that the house would never get finished, or at any rate not for several years. And even now, though I know you are in the Bahamas by this time, I am not at all certain that you have a roof over your heads. The utmost my imagination can achieve are walls about halfway up. I would be very much obliged if you would drop me a line to say that there has been no rain since you arrived. However, you two dear people are accustomed to sleep practically out of doors. . . .

I find also that I can't imagine Effendi Hill House with the rites of hospitality interrupted, its Ministrants departed; like a deserted temple! However, I suppose you will both be back about the end of April for a stay before you move on to the farmhouse.

I expect to hear soon from Eric about the scheme for a book of collected short stories. I assure you, my dear Effendi, that even if I were not certain that in all your schemes you think of my welfare (more than I deserve to be thought of), I would still be most reluctant to negative any scheme of yours. But of course I will be sincere with you, even at the risk of being thought unreasonable and crotchety. I think that once, in conversation, I told you that in my view every volume of my short stories has a unity of artistic purpose, a mood of feeling and expression, which makes it different from every other.

Authors have many strange illusions about themselves; but I think that what I say would be visible to critical judgment, and even could be felt as a mere impression. For instance (even on mere inspection), the volume of *Tales of Unrest* is a totally different expression of my art from, say, *A Set of Six*. Or the whole of the *Typhoon* volume from *Within the Tides*. Or take the volume of *Youth*, which in its component parts presents the three ages of man (for that is what it really is, and I knew very well what I was doing when I wrote "The End of the Tether" to be the last of that trio). I can't somehow imagine any of those stories taken out of it and bound cheek and jowl with a story from another volume. It is in fact unthinkable.

Having said that much I will say no more because I don't know what you have exactly in your mind. Of course if you think of a selected volume, a selection of the least significant tales could be made and published, with a special preface where I would try to express plainly my point of view. After all, I am old enough by now to be allowed to give a clue to the younger generation that may do me the honour of reading my works.[1]

I am glad to be able to tell you that I have turned the corner as far as my health is concerned. I am going now to grapple with the novel

[1] Conrad wrote a special preface for that volume, *The Shorter Tales of Joseph Conrad:* the preface is also reprinted in *Last Essays*. Both volumes were published after Conrad's death.

in which those critics that found *The Rover* somewhat slight work will find size and weight enough, I can promise them.

Last week-end the baby [1] came in state to visit us here, bringing with it its parents and its nurse. The baby is strong and has a voice which in babies may be compared to a baritone amongst grown-ups. It also looks remarkably like a human being already. I am not so satisfied with Borys's health, which presents some neurasthenic symptoms again.

I hope, however, that those symptoms are temporary and that they won't interrupt his progress. He has however a very good doctor who has pulled him together most successfully before and is confident of doing it again.

Poor Mrs. C. is very much crippled with the new development of the leg. She sends you both her best love and her best wishes for health and a good time in the sunny Bahamas. And I send mine ditto with dutiful respects to the Lady Commander (whose hands I beg leave to kiss).

Ever, my dear Effendi, your old Conrad.

To John Galsworthy

Oswalds.
22. 2. '24.

DEAREST JACK,

We are so glad of dear Ada's recovery from her bronchial trouble. I've heard so much of the perfections of the Portuguese climate that I thought colds were unknown there. You must have caught them from English visitors. I won't have one of my last illusions destroyed.

Your joint copy of *The Rover* (first ed.) was awaiting you here. Somehow I could not get anything definite about your address from Eric. I'll send it now to Hampstead.

I am glad you think well of *The Rover*. I have wanted for a long time to do a seaman's "return" (before my own departure) and this seemed a possible peg to hang it on. The reception was good,—and so were the sales,—but when the book came out, I was too seedy to care. I had about 10 weeks of a pretty bad time. My recovery was swift,—but my confidence has been badly shaken. However, I have begun to work a little,—on my runaway novel.[2] I call it "runaway" because I've been after it for two years (*The Rover* is a mere "interlude") without being able to

[1] Joseph Conrad's grandson, Philip Conrad.
[2] *Suspense.*

overtake it. The end seems as far as ever! It's like a chase in a nightmare,—weird and exhausting.

Your news that you have finished a novel brings me a bit of comfort. So there are novels that *can* be finished,—then why not mine? Of course I see "fiction" advertised in the papers,—heaps of it. But publishers' announcements seem to me mere phantasms of my own disordered brain. I don't believe in their reality,—which, of course, proves that I am not hopelessly insane,—yet.

My congratulations, my dearest fellow. And a short story too! I'll have to write two presently (to complete a vol.) and I am incapable of finding a subject,—even for one. Not a shadow of a subject!

Poor Jessie suffers from some more painful symptoms in the operated limb. She's very crippled,—but still cheerful in her equable way. I see now and then something like the shadow of mortal weariness on her face. As to John he wrote me a long letter in French, quite good.[1] He studies at the Berlitz Institute, draws at the École pratique des Beaux-Arts, and fences 3 times a week,—not to speak of driving the Br. Consul's car, having teas (and, no doubt, improving discourses) with the British Chaplain and conversing with the Bost family (eleven of them). The recital of his activities has made me quite giddy, so I end with our dear love.

To Frank Swinnerton

Oswalds,
March 25th, 1924.

MY DEAR MR. SWINNERTON,

I want to tell you without delay that I have just received, from an old friend in America, two pp. torn out of *Vanity Fair* which gratified and touched me more than I thought anything in print could do. The vital warmth of your article, after so many years' acquaintance with my books, found its way straight into my heart. I had no idea that a work of mine had awakened such a response in a boy of 17 who was to mature into a fellow writer with such a grasp on life and such a power of personal vision. Your generous words will be added to the small, treasured hoard of a few men's utterances,—the clearest of my reward—which I cherish like a miser his gold. But unlike a miser I cherish most the thought that when the hour strikes I'll have it to leave behind me—an undreamt of fortune!

I must also thank you for putting *The Rover* into his proper place

[1] John, the novelist's younger son, was then staying in le Havre with the Bost family to learn French.

with the authority which appertains to your critical standing in literature. The way that book has been written about has made me uncomfortable. Of course, you are right. I don't say "just," because you have been indulgent to the utmost limit.

To Elbridge L. Adams

Oswalds.
26. 3. '24.

MY DEAR ADAMS,

I was startled by your account of the operation. It looks to me as tho' you had come back from very far away. Pray do not do anything of the kind again.

Pardon me all my shortcomings. I am about the most imperfect man on earth; and if it had not been for the indulgence of my friends I would not know where to hide my head.

The fact of the matter is, my dear friend, that all this year—up to 3 weeks ago—I have not been well at all. Now I am better and am doing some work, slowly. Mentally I feel still languid. But all this is improving.

Epstein has been here for the last week doing my bust: just head and shoulders. It is really a magnificent piece of work. He will be done modelling this week and there will be five bronze copies cast. Muirhead Bone has arranged this. I was reluctant to sit, but I must say that now I am glad the thing has come off. It is nice to be passed to posterity in this monumental and impressive rendering.

Besides this there is not much news to tell you. Alas! There is no chance of us coming to Mass. to take possession of the cottage. In September we will leave this house and go into winter quarters in the South of France—I hope. But Jessie is not getting on very well and we may have to stick somewhere near the surgeons for God knows how long.

She is writing to-day to Mrs. Adams, to whom please give my love, as well as to the chicks. Whatever happens keep me in your memory.

To Henry S. Canby

Oswalds.
April 7th, 1924.

DEAR SIR,

Thank you for your friendly letter.

The truth is that I know nothing of the book of which you speak. My

business is not the reading of books—at any rate not reading of fiction—and I don't know that I am at all qualified to write introductions for other people's stories. I don't care for writing at all. What interests me is creative work. I hope you won't take it ill if I decline your suggestion. One does that sort of thing for a personal friend of whom one thinks highly, or for some work of a remarkable artistic or intellectual character, or for some profound personal reason as, for instance, the introduction I wrote for a geographical publication in London. But otherwise I am really not competent and, to speak the whole truth, not sufficiently interested.

It seems to me that people imagine I sit here and brood over sea stuff. That is quite a mistake. I brood certainly, but . . .

"Youth" has been called a fine sea-story. Is it? Well, I won't bore you with a discussion of fundamentals. But surely those stories of mine where the sea enters can be looked at from another angle. In the *Nigger* I give the psychology of a group of men and render certain aspects of nature. But the problem that faces them is not a problem of the sea, it is merely a problem that has arisen on board a ship where the conditions of complete isolation from all land entanglements make it stand out with a particular force and colouring. In other of my tales the principal point is the study of a particular man, or a particular event. My only sea-book, and the only tribute to a life which I have lived in my own particular way, is *The Mirror of the Sea.*

I regret to say that I have not seen your article in the New York *Evening Post* on the occasion of the Limited Edition. I am very glad you are going to write on the pop. ed. Does that mean the "Concord" which Doubledays are bringing out? Will you be kind enough to send it to me? I think we shook hands at Mrs. Curtiss James's. I was extremely tired, notwithstanding everybody's display of kindliness, by this new experience, which will remain unique. I am truly glad to hear that the Literary Editor of the New York *Evening Post* was interested by my attempt to survey the genesis of *Victory,* poor as it must have been. It is a book in which I have tried to grasp at more "life-stuff" than perhaps in any other of my works, and the one too of which the appreciation of the public has given me the most pleasure.

Will you give our friend Chris [1] my love for himself and all the family?

[1] Christopher Morley.

To J. St. Loe Strachey

Oswalds.
May 24th, 1924.

DEAR MR. STRACHEY,

Thank you very much for your letter. I am very sensible to the compliment of being asked to contribute to the *Spectator*.

I think you will agree that living as I do out of the world (too much so, alas!—but it's too late to repine now) and not even reading the papers with any regularity, I am not competent to deal with the subject. Speaking *entre nous,* Europe collectively may be dead but the nations composing it don't give me that impression. France is working hard from end to end. Italy has given us a marvellous example of vitality quite lately. Germany is very much alive internally in her own characteristic way. The newly created states do, at any rate, struggle for life as if they believed in their future. No. Europe is very far from being a graveyard. One need not be very optimistic to see that. So it seems to me. But it may be the illusion of a solitary man. I do not know what may happen to-morrow, but I hope I will be allowed to keep that illusion to the end of my life.

To J. St. Loe Strachey

Oswalds.
May 27th, 1924.

DEAR MR. STRACHEY,

It is very good of you to write to me and, of course, I can have no objection to you quoting the passage you mention. But writing to you, in perfect confidence of being understood, I am afraid I did not watch the wording. It strikes me that for purposes of quotation the phrase "Europe collectively may be dead" is not very good as it stands. Perhaps it would have been better if I had written: "Europe outwardly may look dead" (in the sense that its old watchwords and formulas of international intercourse are dead).

However, I will leave that to you, merely remarking that words that get into print become at once victims of that "uncomprehension" which is the characteristic of the bulk of reading mankind.

I shall look forward eagerly to your article in which my words will have the honour to be embodied.

Kindest regards.

To F. N. Doubleday

Oswalds.
June 2nd, 1924.

VERY DEAR EFFENDI,

I am glad you accept the reference to you in my Preface [1] in the spirit in which it was traced; which is that of affection. Florence's delightful letter arrived this morning and warmed up the cold air of a gloomy wet day. After reading it and taking it to my heart downstairs I sent it up to Jessie, who I think will not come down to-day.

All the family was here yesterday, John having arrived from France on a short visit, as we thought that the operation would take place this week. However, it has been put off till the 13th, Sir Robert's engagements preventing him from coming down here before. He will arrive here on the 12th for the night. Jessie intends to give him his dinner and then at about 8.30 drive to the Nursing Home in Canterbury. Sir Robert intends to operate very early next morning and then go on to London, after lunching with the local surgeon.

Both of them are hopeful that this will do away definitely with all those local troubles which have been such a source of pain and worry to us both. But that of course cannot be ascertained for some time, as such troubles have been known to recur even after a whole year.

I notice with a certain amount of satisfaction that *The Rover* is still an object of critical discussion. I have this morning received a two-pages-and-a-half criticism from the editor of the *Dial* under the ominous caption, "A Popular Novel." And it was not meant ironically. I never dreamed that such a thing would happen to me. I must confess that I have been extremely interested by what the critic (Gilbert Seldes) was moved to say. I have seldom met two pages and a half of print that contained so much in the way of insight, comprehension, and I may add also understanding; in addition to subtle feeling (all of a most intelligent kind). I feel half inclined to write a letter to the editor, but I have never answered any criticism in my life, so far, so I am loth to break the rule. Moreover, I think that an author who tries to "explain" is exposing himself to a very great risk—the risk of confessing himself a failure. For a work of art should speak for itself. Yet much could be said on the other side; for it is also clear that a work of art is not a logical demonstration carrying its intention on the face of it. I wish I had you within reach, so that I could take your advice from a certain point of view and dear Florence's from another.

But after all I suppose that silence is the most becoming.

[1] The Preface to *The Shorter Tales of Joseph Conrad.*

To Mrs. F. N. Doubleday[1]

DEAREST FLORENCE,

I was delighted with your good and charming letter. Give my affectionate regards to the Saffords (not forgetting Cornelia) and express my high appreciation of Mr. & Mrs. Davis's friendly recollection of my unworthy self. To all American friends—Greetings! with extended right arm *à la "fascisti."*

The only news—strictly *entre nous trois*—which I have to send—is: that 3 days ago I had a letter from the Prime Minister (it came in a long envelope and I thought it was a supertax form) offering me a "birthday honour" in the shape of a knighthood. I declined with deference and, I hope, in appropriate terms.

Consider yourselves sworn to secrecy. The letter is marked "private and conf^{dl}"—and the news must not get into the papers either here or in America.

Ever since this happened Jessie has been teasing me. I am glad she has something to amuse her—a good, old domestic joke. She sends her best love to you both.

I am, dear Florence, your most affect^{te} friend and servant.

To Eric Pinker

5. 7. '24.
7. P. M.

DEAREST ERIC,

You are right. I don't want to sign any copies of the *N. of the Crime,*[2] or make myself specially responsible for that idiotic publication.

Things here do not look so well just now. I won't enter into details —but there are one or two bad signs. Still—it may be only a passing trouble. She is in much pain just now. I've just come from the N. Home.[3] She sends her love.

To Sir Sidney and Lady Colvin[4]

Oswalds.
8 July, '24.

DEAREST FRIENDS,

I've just come from Jessie who showed me your letter. What adds to

[1] Written on the back of the previous letter.
[2] *The Nature of a Crime.*
[3] The Nursing Home.
[4] This letter was written when Lady C. was dying.

my desolation is the awful feeling of not being able to show in any way the profound affection I have for you both, dear Lady Colvin and for dear Colvin whose friendship is the greatest reward and the most precious gift that the gods have given me. My heart sinks while I write these words—mere words, alas—like a vain cry of a man in a bottomless pit! I am the most useless of men and apparently the most selfish. I feel, and Jessie feels with me, that we ought to be nearer, to have always been nearer—to you both.

Please give Colvin my dear love, and accept this inarticulate attempt to express my concern and sympathy from your ever loving friend and devoted servant.

To Sir Robert Jones

Thursday
10 July, '24.

DEAREST FRIEND,

Perhaps your grateful patient has told you of my idiotic behaviour in going to bed with bronchitis. I am better now. Fox says the lungs are clear. But I feel languid. I have been to see Jessie three times this week but when I get home I get to bed and give myself up to passive contemplation of no very cheerful kind. It is 18 months since I have done any work that counts!

The only comfort (and it is enormous) I have is to feel that Mrs. C. (as we all call her) is going on splendidly. She looks altogether another person. The expression of her physiognomy is quite different. I noticed that the very day after the operation. It is as if, like a magician of old, you had exorcised a devil. Marvellous! I won't say anything of my relief. It is infinite.

Pardon this scrawl. I am writing in bed. I think it is still the best place for me; though for the last day or two I am feeling stronger. The cough has left me entirely—the first time for the last two years.

Pray give my dear love to Hilda and Fred. I hope all is well there.

Always your most affectionate and grateful.

P. S. Please don't trouble to answer this.

To Eric Pinker

Oswalds.
Sund: 20. 7. '24.

DEAREST ERIC,

Thanks for your good letter. I am no end sorry to hear your wife is not so well. Drop us a word on a p. c.

It is extremely important that in conveying to O'Brien my refusal to let the *N. of the C.*[1] appear in the Best Stories of 1924 you should point out with some emphasis that the *N. of the C.* is 18 years old and would be altogether out of place in such a vol. There have been pars. in the press alluding to it as a fresh collaboration! My refusal is absolute. Partington's terms are acceptable and under the circumstances we had better accept them—I suppose. Every little helps. But it is vexing a bit in view of the plans I had to have *all* my plays in one vol. to be included in both my Lt^ed^ and all the Coll^ed^ editions (Eng. & Am.) It is a compl^on^ too, for P. requires a preface—and that preface would not do if ever the 3 plays appeared together, say in the two Lt^d^ or in the Coll^ed^. And then again I imagine F. N. D. will want to publish too.

Have you any notion how he is likely to feel about it?

To Eric Pinker

Sunday.
30. 7. '24.

MY DEAR ERIC,

Thank you for your letter. I meditated over it a bit and I wonder whether you think an answer could be given Partington to the effect that:—Conrad says that he will write a preface (anything from 3–6 pp. I suppose it would be a small vol:).

I think the preface is well worth the extra 20 in *advance* from his point of view. Its effect will be that every collector of Conrad will have to get the vol. if he wants his coll^on^ to be complete. And of course others too may be influenced to buy by the fact of there being a preface.

I wait for Miss H.'s[2] return (on the 2nd) to send you my newsp^er^ article. No typist could make out that mess. But she will. So I will send a correct clean copy (dupl^te^). You will pass on one of them to the *Dy. Mail* directly you have settled the Am. pub^on^. Jessie has a long road before her yet. She sends her love in which I join to you and Margot.

[1] *The Nature of a Crime.*
[2] Miss Hallowes, Joseph Conrad's secretary.

* * *

He was working at his novel, *Suspense,* and he intended to write a second volume of impressions which would have supplemented *The Mirror of the Sea.* It was to have dealt more particularly with the ships and sailors he had known during his days at sea. He was talking, too, at this time of writing a novel in which a politician should play a part. He complained of his health, but this was the old story and it seemed to those near him that he was still full of energy and that his intellectual vigour would be equal to ten more years of work. But three days after the above letter was written, after eighteen hours of distress, he died suddenly of a heart attack at half past eight in the morning of August 3, 1924.

The day before, he was working at his table, and such an end is in harmony with a life in which the energy of genius always triumphed over misfortune, ill-health, and chance. His body lies in Canterbury cemetery. His abiding monument is in his literary masterpieces, where his magnificent intensity and breadth of vision are marked by his rare craftsmanship. To the twenty-eight volumes of his works we have added these two volumes of his Life and his intimate Letters, another memorial of one who was an artist in the great manner and a man strong in soul.

THE END

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